



Poor Folk

A Novel
by
Fedor Dostoievsky

Translated
from the Russian
by
Lena Milman

With
A Critical Introduction
by
George Moore

No 3.

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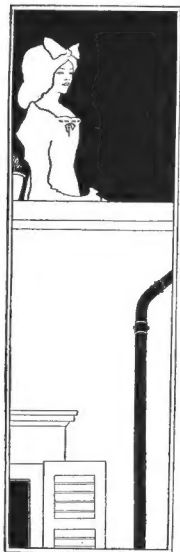
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no. 15

et al.

POOR FOLK

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London
Elkin Mathews
and John Lane
—
Roberts Brothers
Boston
1894

Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty



P R E F A C E

WITHOUT denying to Mr. Kipling much real literary talent, we may venture to express surprise that critics should have confused the merits of his well-hammered anecdotes with the exquisite sensibilities of Mr. Bret Harte's little masterpieces. Mr. Kipling's artistic intention was apparent in his first book. It was quite clear that it did not range higher than the vigorous telling of whatever anecdote happened to strike his fancy. But Mr. Bret Harte's stories are nearly always the dramatisation of a moral idea, and the anecdote that does not represent a moral idea, however curious, however exciting, can never rise to the height of great literature. What is *Hamlet*, what is *King Lear*, what is *Othello*, *Don Quixote*, *Faust*,

Madame Bovary, L'Education Sentimentale, Mademoiselle de Maupin, the whole of *La Comédie Humaine*, Tourgueneff, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky, and Ibsen, but the dramatisation of moral ideas? To make myself clear, I will ask why *Robinson Crusoe* is greater than *Treasure Island*, why Poe is greater than Stevenson?

In the summer of Mr. Kipling's triumphs, Maupassant became a lunatic, this brought his name more than ever before the public, and Kipling was declared to be the Maupassant of England. At that time there had never been as great a writer as Maupassant; no one had ever written short stories with such consummate art. Tourgueneff was completely forgotten, and *La Maison Tellier* became all that was most wonderful, most perfect, most rare, most exquisite in art. The success of Maupassant's stories is easily explained. Here was a man who saw the modern struggle for existence as numberless little dramas; he could detach and could simplify; his simplifications were

crude but they were direct ; he was gifted with a sense of proportion ; and these little pictures, which he perceived so clearly, he executed with a flowing brush, using for medium a gally-pot filled with the latest pessimism of his time ; not the grand pessimism of Flaubert, but a decoction prepared for general consumption ; and he did with Flaubert's style what he did with Flaubert's thought, he popularised both. Maupassant's best work *Boule de Suif* was composed in the immediate influence of the master mind, and its satire is deeper than that of the companion story, *La Maison Tellier*. In *La Maison Tellier* Maupassant is at his best and his worst ; the story exists merely on the surface, but I admit that it is admirably proportioned and it is conducted in every detail with remarkable skill. Never was Maupassant more shallow never was he more adroit. Had M. Sardou practised short story writing, I see no reason why he might not have written this tale.

To realise its superficiality we need only compare it with any story by Tourgueneff, or

almost any story by Tolstoi or Dostoievsky — *Poor Folk*, for instance. A careful reading of *Poor Folk* will, I think, convince the thoughtful that the anecdote related, however blithely, however vividly, however picturesquely, remains little literature, just as little men remain little men however smartly they dress, however gracefully they deport themselves. But that we should prefer little literature when it is good, and little literature can at times be very good indeed (witness Maupassant and Kipling), to the pseudo great goes without saying. It were surely better to have written *Monte Cristo* than *Robert Elsmere*.

I remember writing of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*: 'this is Gaboriau with psychological sauce.' The desire to be witty, to be epigrammatic, has led men into phrases which they afterwards regret. Still the phrase does not seem to me to be wholly unwarranted. Notwithstanding some magnificent passages, *Crime and Punishment* seems to lumber along luggage-train

fashion. When I read the second volume perhaps my opinion will alter. However that may be, *Poor Folk* has sufficed to change my opinion of Dostoievsky, and it is not too much to say that in that story I find him standing side by side with Tourgueneff and Tolstoi. *Poor Folk* challenges comparison with Tourgueneff. I mean that we ask ourselves if it is as perfect as Tourgueneff; that it is not goes without saying; for is not Tourgueneff the greatest artist that has existed since antiquity? The form is not so pure, the divination is not so subtle, the touch is heavier. When we turn to Balzac we see that it has not the eagle flight of his genius; the subject is not grasped and torn with such fierce talons; Balzac is to Tourgueneff what Michael Angelo is to a great Greek sculptor, more complete and less perfect. Dostoievsky in this story may be not inaptly compared to one of the Florentine sculptors Della Robbia, for instance. A certain coarseness of texture alone seems to me to separate it from work of the very highest class. It is to

Tourgueneff what fine linen is to fine silk ; I am not speaking of fineness of verbal style, but of fineness of thought. It is woven on the same loom, and the manner of weaving is the same, only the material employed is a little commoner. I have said that the manner of weaving is the same. The word manner was forced upon me, and the sentence perhaps stands in need of revision, for the word falsifies my thought. For what seems to me to distinguish this story in particular and Russian fiction in general from English and French fiction is that the manner of weaving is not apparent. In English and French fiction we can follow the method. We can say, this is the point whence the design was started, and the threads were worked in such a manner, and the colour harmony was composed in this or that way. But in Russian fiction the manner of working is not to be detected, the picture is apparent only in the result. The life upon the written page is as mysterious as the life around us ; we know not how or whence it came, its

origin eludes our analysis. The vulgar mechanism of preparatory scenes is withdrawn, is concealed in the things themselves, and so inherent and so complete is the logical sequence, that we are unconsciously prepared for each event ; vulgar foreshadowing is unnecessary, and we watch the unfolding of the story as we watch the unfolding of rose leaves.

Poor Folk is written in letters, the most artificial of all forms of narrative, but so easily are the difficulties of the form overcome that no trace of composition appears on the page, and in each succeeding letter is distilled some further addition to our knowledge of the poor old copying clerk, the harshness and rigour of his life, his sublime resignation, and the pure, idolatrous affection he bears for his cousin, who lives over the way, in as poor circumstances as himself. I have heard of convicts who conceive the most absorbing affection for the mouse they have succeeded in taming ; the whole world for them is centred in the timid

creature that has come to feed out of their hands ; the theft of the little thing, or any harm done to it, is sufficient cause for passionate murder and despair. The love of Mákar for Varvara seems to me like the love of a man condemned to penal servitude for life for a mouse that comes into the solitude of his cell for crumbs. Mákar is one of life's convicts, Varvara is the mouse that comes for crumbs ; and the end is the same ; a better filled hand is extended to the mouse, and the mouse returns no more to cheer the cell's loneliness.

In the course of every year we hear and read of countless incidents which the newspapers describe as impressive, important, as thrilling ; yet a few months, a few weeks, a few days, may be a few hours, suffice to obliterate them so completely from our minds that we cannot recall any distinct impression of them. Who remembers anything about the marriage of the Duke of York ? Already it is confused in the public mind with the Lord Mayor's show, the

Prince of Wales' birthday, and the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. Yet the whole country talked of nothing else for weeks; the newspapers issued wedding numbers, and portraits of the royal couple were everywhere. But memory of the spectacle which entranced all London has passed away as lightly as a shadow. But the narrative of a disreputable old drunkard's grief for the death of his son, told without epithets in a few lines of prose, simple as a child's talk, will never be forgotten by any but the most careless. For myself I can say with certainty that no whole year of my life will pass without my seeing that old man running through the mud after his son's coffin, books dropping out of his pockets, and in his hands a huge folio which he never let go.

The theme of this story deepens as it proceeds, and will be found deepest in the last pages. And to maintain a sensation in vibration to the last page is surely genius. The mere act of concluding often serves to break the spell; the least violence, the faintest

exaggeration is enough ; we must drop into a minor key if we would increase the effect, only by a skilful use of anti-climax may we attain those perfect climaxes—sensation of inextinguishable grief, the calm of resignation, the mute yearning for what life has not for giving. In such pauses all great stories end. And *Poor Folk* ; in what sad and solemn harmony does the theme find rest ? The robbery of the young girl by the vulgar seducer ? That would be a little obvious, a little too violent. The effect aimed at is the hopelessness of the old man's life, therefore the arrival of a man who could give Varvara a comfortable home would be better ; for there would be no reason for Varvara refusing him ; she would be so painfully right in accepting him, and the poor old man would have nothing to reproach her with, nothing to rail against, it would be the inevitable, the great tragedy of the inevitable, the accomplishment of things according to an occult law, the results of which we perceive, the reason of

which is hidden from us. Old Mákar knows that she cannot marry him ; he is aware that he is at best a half-witted old man, the laughing-stock of his office, at worst a disreputable old drunkard. He has accepted all other bitterness without a murmur, this one wrings a few cries from his soul, and then not till the very end. During the purchase of Varvara's little trousseau he has run her errands, and when she has gone away with her husband, he goes to her room to see that she has forgotten nothing.

It will be objected that the story is told in letters. It will be said that this form is old-fashioned and conventional. Art may be bad or good, but I fail to see how it can be old-fashioned or new-fashioned ; the question is how much pity, love, hate, grief and affection does a book express. Some months ago I read five letters by a Portuguese nun, written two centuries ago. The expression of passion contained in these letters is so intense that it seemed to me that I knew the unfortunate Marianna and

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the balcony on which she stood when she saw her lover riding past for the first time. Yet we are not told the colour of that balcony, nor of Marianna's hair and eyes, nor of the horse which the faithless lover controlled so admirably. But we see her ; and her balcony and the room in which she used to receive her lover is visible, although neither the pattern of the curtains, nor the form of any piece of furniture is mentioned.

All literary and pictorial conventions are equally false : some appear to the ignorant to be more false than others, and the narrative by means of letters seems to them the falsest of all, a puerile convention quite unworthy of the nineteenth century. Such shallow criticism is to be met with every day in our newspapers. The abolition of monologue on the stage is considered to be an advance in dramatic art ; and the suppressing of every word or phrase which the characters would not be likely to use in familiar conversation is deemed essential in

dramatic writing. But it is a fact that very often a deep human emotion transpires when words and phrases are wholly incompatible with the mind and education of the character speaking, and it is also a fact that very often no emotion whatever transpires when the dialogue is pared down to the very narrowness of the speaker's habitual speech. Art is made up in almost equal proportions of truth and falsehood ; it is by neglecting nature and by copying nature that we may produce illusion.

The least critical cannot fail to perceive that these letters are unlike real letters, that they bear no kind of resemblance to the letters that might have passed between a half-witted clerk and a poor girl living over the way ; nevertheless we realise the character of the old man far better than we should from the publication of the actual correspondence of two such people. What device more obvious than that Varvara should write the story of her life and send it to Mákar ? She could not write the story of her

life unless she was possessed of great literary skill. Why should she be at the trouble of writing it when she can tell it Mákar any evening. In such futile questions modern criticism wastes itself. So I repeat once more that all conventions are equally false, and the business of the artist is not so much to hide from the critic the convention which he employs, as to make him forget it.

GEORGE MOORE.

POOR FOLK

FIRST LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

April 8

MY DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—How happy I was yesterday, how immeasurably, how unspeakably happy! For once in your life, my self-willed darling, you listened to me! Last night I woke up at eight o'clock (you know how I like to have a little nap when I come back from the office!), lit my candle, got my pens and papers together, dipped my pen, when suddenly I happened to look up and my heart gave a great leap. You knew what I wished, what I longed for! I saw the corner of your window curtain drawn down, laid tenderly on the pot of balsams just as I had asked you to lay it: I had a glimpse too of your dear little face at the window; I knew that you looked across from your room to mine, that you were thinking of me. Ah! how sorry I was, my dear, that I could not see your face distinctly. Once my sight was good, but I am getting old, cousin mine, and now my

A

eyes are dim. If I work at night, if I write ever so little, they are red in the morning and fill with tears so that I am ashamed of meeting strangers. But in imagination I saw your smile, your sweet smile, as bright as ever, and my heart beat just as it did once, my darling, when I kissed you—do you remember, Varinka? Do you remember how you shook your finger at me? Mind you write of all this in your next.

What a good idea that was of ours about the curtain, Varinka, was it not? I sit down to my work, I lie down to sleep, I awake, and all the time I know that you have not forgotten me, that you are thinking of me and that you are well and happy. You drop the curtain—that means: ‘Good-night, Mákar Alexeievitch, it is bed-time!’ You raise it—that means: ‘Good-morning, Mákar Alexeievitch, how did you sleep? or: how do you do? As for me, thank God, I am well and happy.’ Do you see, my darling, how cleverly all this is thought out? There is no need even for letter-writing. Is it not ingenious? and it was my idea. Would you have thought me capable of it, Varvara Alexeievna?

I assure you, Varinka, that I have had a better night than I had dared hope, and feel very well in consequence; you know how, in new rooms, in a strange place, one is apt to be wakeful, but I have slept well and feel as fresh as a lark. And what a lovely morning we have, darling! The sun shines in at our open windows, the birds chirp, the air is full of the

sweetness of spring, all nature seems gay—and other things seem to match the weather, everything seems pleasant and spring-like. For last night my very dreams were delightful, and they were all of you, Varinka. I compared you with a bird which delights mankind and adorns nature. And I thought, Varinka, how we human beings, living amid cares and turmoil, might well envy the innocent, careless life of the birds of the air. I had other thoughts like these in my dreams, and I went on making far-fetched comparisons. I have a little book over there, Varinka, full of such ideas, and I write them down because my dreams are not always happy dreams. But now it is spring-time and my thoughts are all pleasant, and I have sweet dreams, in which all is *couleur de rose*. That is how I came to write in this way, it is really all out of the book, the author expresses just such a longing as mine in his verses. He says: 'O would I were a wild-bird etc., etc.' But enough of this! There is plenty more in the book, God knows!

Where were you going this morning, Varinka? I had not yet left for the office when, like a bird, you flitted from your room and passed gaily through the court. How happy it made me to see you! Ah! Varinka, Varinka, you are not fretting, are you? Grief finds no relief in tears; this I know, and I know by experience. Now you are in easier circumstances, and your health will surely improve. How is

your Fédora? Ah! what a good woman she is! Write and tell me, Varinka, how you get on with her, and whether you are satisfied. She is something of a grumbler, your Fédora, but she is so good, you must put up with that, Varinka. God bless her!

I have already told you about our Theresa,—she too is a good, trustworthy woman. I was worrying myself about our letters: how were they to be transmitted? And lo! God raised up Theresa to help us. She is a good kind woman of but few words. But our landlady has no pity and wears Theresa out with hard work as though she were an old rag.

Into what a dirty hole I have fallen, Varvara Alexeievna, but still I have a roof over my head. My former lodging was like a little nest, as you know, so quiet that I could hear the beat of a fly's wing as it passed me by. Here, on the contrary, there are noises of shouting, of quarrelling. You have no idea what it is like. Imagine then a long passage, dark and dirty. On the right hand, a blank wall, on the left, nothing but doors, doors, like the rooms to which they belong, all in a row. Every room is let to one, two, or three tenants. You cannot expect order—it is a very Noah's ark. But there are some quite nice people, there are even a few learned ones: one gentleman (he is a professor of literature) is very cultured and speaks of Homer and Brambeus¹ and other authors,

¹ Brambeus, a famous Russian political writer.

they say he is a very clever man. Then there are two officers who play cards all day, a sailor who has been first mate, and an English tutor. Wait a little and in my next I will amuse you by describing them humorously in full detail. Our landlady is a dirty little old woman, who keeps her dressing gown and slippers on all day, and is always scolding Theresa. I live in the kitchen, or rather (to be quite exact) in a little room just off the kitchen. I must say our kitchen is a nice one, cheerful and clean. Mine is a humble little room enough, but let me explain myself more fully: the kitchen is large with three windows, a partition which runs across it encloses a sumptuous apartment for me; my arrangements are of course very simple but they are also convenient. I have a window and, as I said before, everything is most comfortable. Such is my abode. And are you not thinking to yourself that there is something very odd about this, about my living so near the kitchen, why should I? But indeed I live quite to myself behind the partition, I keep away from every one and get on very well in a quiet way. I have a bed, a table, a chest of drawers, a couple of chairs and some sort of curtains. Of course there are better lodgings, perhaps much better ones, and yet I have chosen this to suit my own convenience: do you think there is no other reason? I will tell you another: your window is just opposite mine. I see you pass and then all things seem brighter for poor me and cheaper. In this

house the rent of the cheapest room with board is thirty-five roubles.¹ I could not afford so much. My lodging costs me seven roubles and my board five silver roubles, twenty-four and a half roubles altogether, and hitherto I have paid thirty although I denied myself many little luxuries. I did not always have tea and now I can afford myself both tea and sugar. One is ashamed of not drinking tea, somehow; here most of the other lodgers are well-to-do, so one is ashamed of not doing the same as they. One drinks it for the sake of the opinion of others, for appearances' sake, for position's sake, as it were, but I care very little for such things. I have few fancies. So you see there is not much left for pocket-money, of which every one needs a little for boots and clothes. I spend all my salary, but I do not murmur, and am quite content. I have had sufficient for some years now, and my earnings remain the same.

Forgive me, little one, I have just bought two more pots of balsam and a geranium very cheap. Perhaps you would like some mignonette too. If so, send me word in as long a letter as you have time to write. Pray do not worry your dear little self about anything, or think me unwise to have hired such a room. I am really comfortable and I took it to suit my own convenience. I am actually putting money by and I want for nothing.

¹ Paper rouble=*c.* two shillings.

Silver rouble=*c.* three shillings and threepence.

To look at me, one would imagine that a fly could knock me down with a stroke of its wing, but I am not really so feeble. I am no fool and my disposition is such as his is likely to be whose mind is at peace. Forgive me for this long letter of two sheets. It is long past the time when I ought to go to the office. Many kisses on those little hands of yours from your devoted servant and sincere friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

P.S. I have one request to make : answer me at some length. I will send you some sweets at seven o'clock : enjoy them if you will and do not worry about me or be angry with me. Good-bye, my darling.

SECOND LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

April 8

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Do you know I have a right to be angry with you? I declare, kind Mákar Alexeievitch, I can scarcely bring myself to accept your presents. I know that to make them you have to deny yourself the very necessities of life. How many times have I not told you that I am in need of nothing, absolutely nothing : that, even for the kindnesses you have already done me I can never repay you? And why send me these pots of flowers? We will say nothing about the balsams, but how

could you send me a geranium? I need only casually mention anything for you to go and buy it at once. Was it not terribly expensive? How lovely its blossoms are! Just like tiny crimson crosses. Where did you get such a lovely plant? I have set it in the middle of the window in the most conspicuous place, and a bench on the floor within, on which I will set more flowers when I can afford them. Fédora is delighted: the room is sweet and fresh, a very paradise. But oh! why send me *bonbons* as well? Judging from your letter, I should say that you were beside yourself—paradise, spring, scents, and the chirping of birds are all over it. Surely, said I, what is this but poetry? And yet not a verse in your letter, Mákar Alexeievitch. Still there are tender feelings in plenty and rose-coloured dreams. As to the curtain I never once thought of it; when I was arranging the pots, the curtain caught by accident. There!

Ah! Mákar Alexeievitch! however much you may talk and count over your money, in order to deceive me into the belief that you are well off, you cannot conceal the truth from me or take me in. It is evident that, for my sake, you deny yourself many necessities. What were you thinking of, for instance, when you took such a lodging? Of course you are constantly interrupted and disturbed, you are pressed for room, you are uncomfortable. You love to be alone, to be quiet, and here you are surrounded by God knows

what kind of people! And with your salary you could afford to live far more comfortably. Fédora declares, indeed, that you lived better formerly. Have you then spent all your lifetime in solitude, amid privation, without pleasure, without kind words, content with any corner so long as you could have it to yourself? O dear friend, I am indeed sorry for you! Take every care of your health, Mákar Alexeievitch. You say that your sight has become dim, so give up writing by candle light. Surely your superiors do not require such proof of your industry.

Again I beseech you not to spend any more on me. I know you are fond of me. I know, too, that you are not rich. I got up to-day in such good spirits, feeling so well. Fédora was already at work, and there was plenty for me too. I was ever so happy. I went out to buy some silk, and then set to work. The mood lasted all the morning, and I was quite gay. But now I am sad. Dark thoughts have come back, and my heart is heavy.

What, indeed, will become of me? What fate is in store for me? It is sad to be in such a state of uncertainty as to be afraid to look forward. I cannot bear to look back either. I have endured such misery that my heart sinks at the recollection. How can I ever forgive the wicked people who so tormented me?

It is getting dark. It is time I went back to my work. There are many things of which I could write, but, as it is, the work is never done in time. I must hurry. It is certainly

good for me to write letters. Already I feel less weary. But why do you never come and see us, Mákar Alexeievitch? How is it? Surely, now we are so near, you might spare us a few moments. Do come, please. I have seen your Theresa. She does look ill. I made her a present of twenty kopecks.

There! I very nearly forgot what I particularly wanted to say: pray write without fail and tell me how you are getting on. What sort of people are your fellow lodgers? Are you on good terms with them? I am dying to hear. Mind you write. I turned sharp at the corner out of sight on purpose to-day! Go to bed early. I saw a light burning in your room until midnight yesterday. Well, good-bye. To-day I am very downhearted and dull. You too know such days. Adieu.—Your
VARVARA DOBROSELOVA.

THIRD LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

April 8

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I do indeed know such days, I have had many in the course of my sad life. You are surely making fun of me, of poor old me, Varvara Alexeievna. And if so, it is quite my own fault. Old men may not deal in Cupids and *doubles ententes*. Child! what a strange thing is man! sometimes he finds it a great relief to talk things

over. And yet what is the use? who is the better for it? The only result is a pack of nonsense such as God preserve me from writing again. I am not really angry, but it annoys me to be reminded of all I wrote to you so vaguely, and foolishly. And oh! I went off to business to-day in such good spirits. For some reason, or for no reason, my heart kept holiday. I set to work with my papers, and what came of it all? Scarcely had I time to look round, when everything seemed as grey and gloomy as ever. There were the same ink-spots, the same tables covered with a litter of papers, and I too was my old self once more; as things had always been, so they were now, so what induced me to bestride Pegasus? Was any one the better for it? And what influence had been at work? Had the sun come out for a moment or the blue of the sky grown suddenly brighter? 'What could it have been?' you ask. Well, tell me how you account for those sweet scents which the wind wafts in at our windows and for which we vainly seek the cause in the court below? I have only shown how silly I am. Men are apt to talk nonsense when they attempt analyses of their feelings; it is the empty pride of their heart that prompts them. I walked, or rather dragged myself home. My head ached terribly ('Why should you tell her this?' whispers some one at my ear!) A few hours ago I had been happy, fool that I was! and now a wet blanket seemed to wrap me round. But you mistook my feelings, cousin mine, you entirely misread my

letter. It is a fatherly affection which I have for you, Varinka, a purely fatherly affection. For to you I am in the place of an actual father, since, poor child, you have lost yours. I speak from my heart—as a relation. Although only distantly related, related but in the seventh degree, still I am now your nearest of kin, and your guardian, for in that quarter from which with every right you might expect help and protection, you meet with treachery and insult. As for poetry, my dear, am I likely at my age to practise verse-making? Poetry is all nonsense. They whip little schoolboys now if they make bad verses. So much for poetry, cousin mine!

Why do you write to me so much, Varinka, about comfort, rest and other such things? I am not particular or fastidious, I never lived better than I do now, and why should I become so dainty in my latter years? I have enough to eat, enough to wear, I am well shod, and why should I expect to have time for rest? I am no aristocrat! My father was of middle-class origin and both he and all the members of his family died in poorer circumstances than mine. I was not brought up to luxury. My old lodging was no better than this one; it was but fairly comfortable. Indeed I am quite pleased with my present abode, which is in many respects more cheerful than the other; I have more variety here. I have nothing to say in its disfavour, but I regret the old one sometimes. We old people who have lived long in the world grow attached to things to

which we are accustomed, until they seem part of ourselves. My old lodging was small, and the walls—well! what matter! . . . the walls were like other walls, we need not trouble our heads about them. My recollections are beginning to put my former sadness to flight. It is curious how pleasant it is to recall what, at the time, was so hard to bear. Even what seemed unendurable, what vexed me sorely a few minutes ago, that too seems to have improved, to have put on a better appearance as I look back on it. We used to live very quietly, Varinka, my old landlady and I. She is dead now and, when I recall her, I feel quite sorry, for she was a good woman and accepted a low rent. She would knit quilts out of scraps with coarse knitting pins: that was her only occupation. I shared my fire with her and we worked at the same table. She had a grand-daughter, Masha, whom I remember quite a little child, she must be a woman of thirty by now. What a little pickle she was, and how she used to make us laugh! We three kept house together. Sometimes, during the long winter evenings, we would sit at the round table, have our tea and begin our work. And, lest Masha should be dull and in order to keep her quiet, the old woman would tell fairy stories. What stories they were! An educated, grown-up man could follow with as much interest as a child. As for me, I would light my pipe and listen so intently as to forget my work. And the child, our troublesome

little Masha, would grow more and more thoughtful, lean her soft cheek on her hand, open her rosy mouth and, if the incidents of the story were at all alarming, draw closer and closer to the old woman. We so loved to watch her that we gave no heed to the candle flaring in its socket, nor did we hear the snow-storm beat against the door or the tossing of the drifts. We got on very well, Varinka, for nearly twenty years, my old landlady and I. How I go prosing on ; perhaps such memories have no interest for you, but now, in the dusk, I recall the past so vividly. Theresa is making a great noise over something or other, my head aches and my back, and, curiously enough, my thoughts seem to ache too. I am sad to-night, Varinka ! How is it you do not write, little cousin ? How dare I come and see you ? Think how people would talk ! You see I should have to pass right through the court : it would certainly be noticed ; they would ask questions, they would spread false reports, they would gossip and, from the tittle-tattle, they would gather quite wrong ideas about us. No, darling, it will be better for us both, if I content myself with seeing you at church to-morrow evening. Do not reproach me for writing you a letter like this one. On reading it over, I find it is all disconnected. Varinka, I am no longer a young man and my education is but scanty. I was not taught much as a boy, and now, if I try to teach myself, I find I can get nothing into my

head. I know I am no master of the pen and I know without being told and without being laughed at, that, if I attempt to be entertaining, I am sure to write nonsense.

I saw you at the window to-day and watched you draw down the blind. Good-bye, good-bye. God bless you, goodbye, Varvara Alexeievna.—
Your sincere friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN

P.S. Cousin mine, I cannot write a facetious account of any one. I am too old to sneer! I am too ridiculous myself. Remember the Russian saying: he who lays a snare for another shall himself, etc. etc.

FOURTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

April 9

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.—I wonder you are not ashamed, my dear friend and benefactor, of making yourself miserable with such fancies. Are you really offended with me? Ah! I know I have been careless of what I wrote to you, but I had no idea you would take my words as intended for an unkind joke. I should never think, you may be sure, of making a joke about your age or peculiarities. All this has come of my thoughtless words and they came from my being dull, and you know there are states of mind when one will do anything for relief!

I even thought that you had made similar jokes in your own letter. I was indeed grieved when I found I had displeased you. Dear friend, you are mistaken if you think me unfeeling or ungrateful. I speak from my heart when I say I appreciate all you have done for me in defending me from the oppression and spite of those wicked people. I shall ever pray for you and, if my prayer be acceptable, God will not leave you unblessed. I do not feel myself to-day. I grow hot and cold by turns. Fédora is anxious about me. You need not mind coming to see us, Mákar Alexeievitch. What business is it of other people's? We understand one another, and that is all that really matters. I feel too ill to write more. I beg of you not to be angry with me, but to rest assured of my unfailing regard and affection.—Sincerely and devotedly yours,

VARVARA DOBROSELOVA.

FIFTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA.

April 12

DEAREST VARVARA,—O my darling! what is the matter with you? why do you alarm me so? I implore you in every letter to be careful, to avoid going out in the wet, to take every precaution, but you give no heed. Dearest, are you still a child? I know you are not strong, hardly stronger than a little bird. The slight-

est draught gives you cold. So it behoves you to be extremely prudent, to avoid risks and so avoid distressing your friend.

You express a wish, little one, to hear a detailed account of my doings and surroundings. So, cousin mine, I hasten to comply and begin at the very beginning, so as to be the easier understood. In the first place, in the entrance hall of our house is a very tolerable staircase, almost a grand one, clean, well lighted, wide, and all of cast iron and mahogany. As for our backstairs, the less you inquire about them the better. They are winding and steep, damp, greasy, with worn stairs and broken banisters, and such dirty walls that one's hand sticks if one leans against them. On every landing are boxes, chairs, and other broken furniture, heaps of old clothes, broken panes; there are tubs of refuse too, full of filthy litter, eggshells and bits of fish; the smell is sickening.

I have already described the situation of my room. Needless to say it is comfortable, but how close the atmosphere is! You could not say that there was a strong smell but a sickly sour one, suggesting something rotten. When first one enters it disgusts one, but that passes off in a few minutes, and one ceases to notice, for the smell has communicated itself to one's hands, one's clothing—everything smells alike, and so one grows accustomed to it. But cage-birds cannot live in it. Our sailor has already bought his fifth pet, for they cannot breathe this air. Our kitchen is large and well lit.

B

Certainly it is a little smoky in the morning when the meat is being roasted and the fish fried and there is water spilt on the floor so that one is apt to get one's feet wet, but it is not like this in the evening. There are always lines hung with linen to dry, strung across the kitchen from wall to wall and, as my room is close by, is in fact almost in the kitchen, the smell of the washing is rather an annoyance to me, but what does it matter? The longer I live the less I notice it.

The racket begins with us quite early in the morning when the lodgers get up; there is a walking to and fro and a banging of doors; it wakes every one whether they wish to go out to their work or no; we all drink tea together. There are *samovars* belonging to the house, too few as a rule, but we take our turn at them; and woe to him who does not present himself, teapot in hand. I was late with mine the first day and . . . but why should I tell you such things? However it helped me to make every one's acquaintance. Among the first I knew was the mate, and he was so open-hearted as to tell me all about himself, his father and mother, and sister, the assessor, and the town of Cronstadt. He offered to take me under his protection and, there and then, invited me to have tea with him. I found him in that room in the house which is generally devoted to card-playing. I was given tea, and then the players tried to persuade me to try my luck at a game. Whether or no they were laughing at me I cannot tell, but they were accustomed to playing all night themselves and

they were playing when I went in. Dust, smoke filled the room so that one's eyes smarted. I would not play and they soon saw it was no use to press me.

After that none of them spoke to me again, and I was not sorry for it. I do not go to the card-room: the play there is mere gambling. There are evening gatherings too at the professor's. There it is nice and quiet and respectable, all as different as can be from the gambling.

You must know, Varinka, that our landlady is a downright vixen. You know Theresa by sight and I ask you, is she suited for such a post as hers? Is she not as thin as a lean chicken? In this house there are but two servants, Faldony, the landlady's man, and Theresa. I don't know what his real name may be, but he answers to this one, and everyone calls him by it. He is curly-haired, half-witted, unshaven, ill-mannered; he and Theresa are always quarrelling.

So my life is not all I might wish. If we only went to bed at the same time there would be some peace, but this is far from being the case. There are always some sitting up gambling and sometimes behaving in a way it were disgraceful to relate. I am getting used to it nevertheless, but I wonder how people with families can live here. There is one poor family that rents a room which is not on a line with the rest but in a corner as it were. They are quiet folk. One does not hear them though they live in one

room divided by a screen. The man is some sort of clerk out of place, dismissed from his post seven years ago for some reason or other. His name is Gorschkov ; a little white-haired man who goes about in a coat so shabby it makes one sad to look at it, it is even more shiny than mine, a poor sickly looking fellow (we occasionally meet one another in the passage) : his knees tremble, his hands shake, and he nods his head up and down whether from disease or some other cause, God knows. He is timid and shy and shrinks aside as though to avoid people. I am often shy myself but not so bad as that. He has a wife and three children. The eldest, a boy, is the image of his father and equally sickly. The wife must once have been very pretty and is striking even now. Poor thing ! her clothes are all in rags. I hear that they are in the landlady's debt and she is not kind to them. They say that there has been something wrong about Gorschkov, and that he was turned away from his situation, but whether there was ever a lawsuit, whether or no he was ever brought to trial and, if so, with what result, I cannot tell. But poor they are, Heaven help them ! And so quiet in their room, one would never think it was occupied. Even the children hush their voices and never seem to play about. One evening I happened to pass by their door at a moment when an unusual stillness prevailed in the house. I heard a sobbing and then a whispering and more sobbing, as though some one within were crying

so bitterly and so low that my heart ached, and all night the thought of these poor people haunted me so that I could not sleep.

Now, good-bye, Varinka, my little friend. I have written all I know of my fellow-lodgers. I have been thinking of you every moment of the day and my heart is full of longing to see you. I know you have not got so much as a warm cloak. These Petersburg springs with their winds and sleet and snow are almost too much even for me. God preserve me from this 'bracing air' ! Do not examine my words too closely, Varinka. I write just what comes into my head on the chance of amusing you. It would be quite different if I were a man of any education. You know I have little or none. —Always sincerely your friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

SIXTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

April 25

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I came across my cousin Sacha to-day. Poor thing ! it is her turn to suffer now. She tells me that Anna Fédorovna has found out all about me. It seems as though she would never leave off persecuting me. She says, she wishes to forgive me, to forget the past, and that she will certainly come and see me shortly ; that you are no relation of mine, but that she is my next of kin ; that

you have no right to be on terms of intimacy with me ; that it is disgraceful and indecent for me to live by your kindness. She says too, that I forgot her hospitality, that she was as a mother to me, that, had it not been for her, I should probably have died of starvation, that, having taken us into her house, she fed us and kept us for over two years and a half, and besides all this, that she forgave us our debts. But oh ! she had no mercy on my poor mother ! had mother but known how she treated me ! God knows. Anna Fédorovna says too that, as for me, I was too stupid to earn my own living, that she made me happy, that no one can blame her, and that I am evidently incapable of so much as defending my own good name and do not care to do so. God knows who is to blame for this. She goes on to say that Mr. Bikov was quite right, that of course he could not be expected to marry one who . . . but no ! I cannot write it. It is terrible to bear such injustice, Mákar Alexeievitch. I am at my wits' end to know how to act. I can do nothing but tremble and I have cried so much that I had to write this letter all over again. I really thought that Anna Fédorovna knew she had treated me badly and now . . . !

Pray, dear friend, do not alarm yourself about my bodily health. I am really not ill, but I got a little chill when I attended the mass for my dear mother. Why did you not accompany me as I asked you to do ? Ah ! poor mother ! if you could come back from the grave, if you could see all they have done to me ! V. D.

SEVENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

May 20

VARINKA, MY DARLING!—I am sending you some grapes ; they say there is nothing so good if one wants to get well, and the doctor recommends them as the very best thing for quenching thirst. The other day you wished for some roses, so I send you a few now. How is your appetite, my dearest ? That is the important thing now. As for the rest, let us thank God that the worst is over and that our misfortunes seem drawing to an end at last. Thank God, indeed ! As for books, I cannot procure any at present. There is a very well-written book which is much talked of just now. I have not read it myself, but every one praises it. I have asked for it and they promise to send it to me. But I wonder whether or no you will care to read it. You are much harder to please in such matters than I. I find it difficult to hit off your taste exactly, well as I know you, little one. You like poetry—sighs, Cupids—well ! I will get you some poetry, I will get you anything you like.

I am very well. There is no need for anxiety about me. What Fédora told you about me is quite untrue, tell her from me that she is an old gossip ! I have certainly not sold my new uniform. If I did, I should get but forty silver roubles for it, so it would not be worth while. Fédora is so suspicious, so absurdly suspicious. We shall enjoy life yet,

my darling! Only be quick and get well and do not grieve an old man. Who could have told you that I had grown thinner? That is another calumny. I am so well and fat, as to be almost ashamed; if only you would get well too!

Well, good-bye, little friend. Would it were mine to kiss those little thin fingers.—Your friend always,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

P.S. O my darling! why do you keep on writing to me like this? You must be crazy! How can I go and see you oftener? How can I? I ask you. I might indeed come under cover of darkness, but not at this time of the year, when the days are so long. I scarcely left your side during your illness while you were delirious. I can't think now how I managed it. But I was forced to stay away when I found people were beginning to whisper and ask questions. Surely there is gossip enough here without that. I can trust Theresa; she is no talker. But think a moment! What will people say when they find out all about us? What will they say when they know? So keep up heart, my dearest, and as soon as you are well we can easily appoint a meeting out of doors.

EIGHTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 1

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I was so anxious to do something to please and amuse you, as a reward for all your trouble and care, all your love for me, that I actually took the trouble of rummaging in my chest of drawers for the manuscript which I now enclose. I have begun my story from the time my happiness ended. You have often questioned me about my former life, about my mother, and Pokrovski, and Anna Fédorovna, and my recent misfortunes, and you have begged me to let you see this book in which, for some unknown reason, I wrote an account of them all. So I think this packet will interest you. It has made me sad to read over what I have written; I feel twice as old as I did when I wrote the last line. It was all written at different times. Good-bye, Mákar Alexeievitch. I am so weary, and tormented by insomnia. How dreary is convalescence!

V. D.

VARVARA'S STORY

I

I WAS but fourteen when I lost my father, and my childhood was the happiest part of my life. I did not spend it here, but far away in

the depths of the country, in the province of T——, where my father was steward of Prince P.'s large property. We lived very contentedly and quietly in one of the Prince's villages. I was a lively little girl, who did nothing all day but run wild in the fields, the woods or the garden, and about whom no one troubled his head. My father was always busy, my mother kept house; no one taught me anything, and I had no wish to learn. Sometimes I would run off in the early morning to the pond, to the wood, or to the reapers in the meadow, and, no matter how scorching the sun, I would go, I cared not how far away from the village, and return home at night, with face scratched and frock torn by the brambles; nor did I mind the scolding I received in consequence.

I think I should always have been happy, had I been allowed to pass my life in one place, and in the country. But I was forced to leave my home while still but a child, for I was only twelve years old when we migrated to Petersburg. Ah! how sad it makes me to recall our preparations for departure! How I wept at taking leave of all that was so dear to me! I remember throwing my arms round my father's neck and entreating with tears to be allowed to remain a little longer in the country. My father scolded me, and my mother cried, and told me that for business reasons it was inevitable we should go: the old Prince had died, and his successors had dismissed my father

from his post. There was some money of his in the hands of private persons in Petersburg, and, wishing to put his affairs in order, he considered his personal presence there essential. This I learned afterwards from my mother. So we all moved to the neighbourhood of Petersburg, and stayed there until my father's death.

How hard it was for me to grow accustomed to the new life! We went to Petersburg in the autumn. The day on which we left home was warm, and the sky cloudless; the work of the fields was just over; the corn was already heaped high on the threshing-floors, whither the birds flocked in large numbers, everything seemed bright and cheerful; but when we entered the city there was a shower of rain, a drizzle of sleet, to say nothing of gusts of wind and muddy pavements, and a throng of strangers with discontented, angry faces. We settled down as best we could. My father was always out, my mother never had a moment's quiet, and they both seemed to forget all about me. It was sad to get up on the first morning after our arrival. Our windows looked on to a blank wall of a dirty yellow colour. The street was always muddy. Passers-by were few, and those there were hurried past closely muffled as though chilled with the cold.

Ill humour and low spirits reigned supreme in our house. We had scarcely any relations or intimate friends, and with Anna Fédorovna my father was always on bad terms

(he was in her debt). People often came to see him on business, and then ensued quarrelling and shouting. After each of such visits my father appeared to grow more morose and irritable ; for hours together he would pace up and down the room, frowning and silent. My mother dared not address him at such times, and so held her peace, while I, sitting in a corner over my book, was as quiet as a mouse, not venturing to move.

Three months after we came to Petersburg I was sent to school. Once more I had to go sadly among a new set of people ! Every one seemed cold and indifferent to me ; the teachers were always finding fault, the girls laughed at me, and I was like a wild, hunted thing. How strict they were, how severe ! the fixed hours, the common meals, the tedious lessons worried me almost to death. I could not sleep, for I cried all through the long, chill, dreary night. In the evenings we had to repeat or learn lessons, and I would sit alone over my phrasebook or vocabulary, immovable, but thinking all the time of my own fireside, of my father, my mother, my old nurse and her fairy stories. Oh ! how unhappy I was ! Yet I took pleasure in the recollection of the veriest trifles so long as they were connected with home. 'How happy I should be there now,' ran my thoughts, 'seated in our little room, and at the *samovar* with my father and mother. I should feel so warm, so snug, so at home ! How I would throw my arms round my mother and hold her fast, so fast !' I would think and think

of these things, and cry softly to myself till the tears fell into my lap, while alas ! the words fell out of my mind equally fast ! In the morning I could not repeat my lesson and the next day it was still unlearned, although all night long my professor, Madame, and my fellow pupils had haunted me and I had said over my lessons in a dream. They punished me by making me kneel upright and take my meals in solitude. No wonder I was always spiritless and weary ! At first the girls made fun of me, teased me, pushed me while I was saying my lesson, pinched me as we went in to meals two and two, and then complained of my behaviour to the governess. But oh ! the joy of Saturday night when my old nurse would come to fetch me home ! How I squeezed the old woman in ecstasy ! She would dress me, wrap me up warm before starting and could scarcely keep pace with me though I never stopped talking all the way home. Oh ! how glad I was to be there again ! how heartily I kissed both my parents as though we had been parted for at least ten years ! How much there was to tell, to talk over ! everything seemed so delightful that I ran about and jumped for very joy. With my father I had serious talks about my lessons, our professors, the French language, Lhomond's grammar, and we were ever so happy together. Even now I love to recall those days. I did my very best to get on with my studies and so please my father. I saw that he looked on me as his last hope, as it were, for he was engaged in a struggle,

God only knows with whom. Every day he grew more ill-tempered and gloomy ; he seemed quite another man now that business did not prosper and we were in debt ! My mother was afraid of letting him see her tears, afraid of speaking even, lest she should make him angry ; she fell into very bad health, grew thinner and thinner and coughed incessantly. When I used to come home from school I would find my mother crying and my father storming. Cruel, angry words were spoken. My father declared that I was no comfort to him, no pleasure ; was he not denying himself in many ways for the sake of my education and I could not so much as speak French yet, in fact all our misfortunes, all our misery he would set down to me and my mother. Oh ! how could he bear to vex her ! One's heart ached to see her thin face and hollow eyes and the hectic flush on her cheek. But my father was harder on me than on any one. What did he not find fault with ? First, I think, with the French language itself, then with me for being so slow at learning it, then with the principal of my school for being a careless, stupid woman who did not study her pupils' characters ; with himself for having found no employment as yet, with Lhomond's grammar for being less good than Zapolski's ; he said that the money was wasted which he spent on me ; that I was evidently unfeeling and hard—in a word I, struggling with all my might to learn words and phrases, was to blame for everything, must answer for all ! And all this was not because

my father had no love for me : he would have done anything for me or for my mother, but this was his way now that his character had become embittered. Anxiety, misfortune, failure had driven the poor man almost mad ; he had become distrustful, suspicious. He was often on the very verge of despair ; and he so neglected his health that one day he caught a chill, suffered but a short time and died so unexpectedly, that for some days we were completely stunned, while, such was my mother's despair, that I feared for her reason. No sooner had my father breathed his last than creditors cropped up on all sides and crowded round us. We gave them all we had, and the house in Petersburg, which my father had bought six months after our arrival, was sold. I don't know how it came about, but in the end, we were left without a roof over our heads, or food to eat. My mother was in a decline and we could not support ourselves. Ruin stared us in the face. I was but just fourteen when, one day, Anna Fédorovna came to see us. She said she was the owner of a property and was some relation of ours. My mother admitted that she was related to us though but distantly. Having never come near us during my father's lifetime, she now appeared, with tears in her eyes, to condole with us in our grief and impoverished circumstances. She added that my father had been to blame for everything, that he had lived beyond his means, had always taken too much upon himself and

had trusted too much in his own powers. She expressed a wish to become intimate with us, offered to forget former differences and, when my mother interrupted her by saying she had never owed her any grudge, she burst into tears, dragged my mother off to church with her and paid for a mass for 'the dear one,' as she now called my father. This brought about a solemn reconciliation between her and my mother.

After a long-winded preamble, in which she took occasion to paint our pitiable position, bereavement, loneliness, and helplessness in vivid colours, Anna Fédorovna invited us to 'take refuge with her,' as she expressed it. My mother thanked her but arrived at no decision for some little time. As however we were without resources and there seemed no alternative, she at length let Anna Fédorovna know that we gratefully accepted her kind offer. Well do I remember the morning when we left Petersburg for the province of Vasiliev. It was a clear frosty day in autumn. My mother wept ; I was very unhappy, my bosom heaved and my heart was heavy with a dull despair.

II

AT first, so long as we, my mother and I, still felt strange in our new abode, we were both shy and afraid of Anna Fédorovna. The house was her property and there were just five tidy

rooms in it. Three of these were inhabited by Anna Fédorovna herself and my cousin Sacha, whom Anna Fédorovna had brought up from a child when the loss of both parents left her an orphan. We lived in one of the remaining rooms and in the other, next door to ours, was a poor student named Pokrovski, who lodged with Anna Fédorovna.

Anna Fédorovna lived very well, far more luxuriously than one would have supposed, but the source of her income was as mysterious as the nature of her occupation. She was always busy, always in a fuss, and bustled out of the house in cabs or on foot many times in the course of the day: but what she did, what business she transacted, that I have never been able to ascertain. She seemed to have a large and varied acquaintance. All day long visitors were coming and going. God only knows what sort of people they were, but they appeared to have dealings with Anna Fédorovna and generally took their leave in a few minutes. My mother used to hustle me out of the room as soon as she heard the door-bell, and this would enrage Anna Fédorovna, who was always saying that we were too proud, proud above our station, though we certainly had no reason to be proud, and so on and so on for hours. At the time I hardly realised what these reproaches meant, but now I know, or at least surmise, why it was that my mother was so long before she would make up her mind to live with Anna Fédorovna, who was

C

an unprincipled woman and gave us no peace. To this day, her object in inviting us to her house remains a mystery to me. At first, indeed, she was fairly gracious, but she soon showed herself to us in her true colours, when she found we were helpless and had nowhere else to go. Later on she became very affectionate to me, gushing, flattering, but in the beginning, I met with the same treatment as my mother. Sometimes it was our dependent position which she cast in our teeth, dwelling at great length on her kindness towards us. She would introduce us to strangers as her poor relations, a helpless widow and orphan, to whom, moved by charity and the love of God, she had given shelter. At meals she would watch every morsel we put into our mouths, never taking her eyes off us, but if we ate nothing, there was quite a fuss : perhaps the food was not good enough for us ? were we so particular ? had we been accustomed to something better at home ? As to my father, she was always abusing him : she said that, for all his pretending to be better than other people, he had turned out to be worse after all : had he not left his wife and daughter without a kopeck, so that, had it not been for kind relations, Christlike and sympathetic, they might have perished from hunger in the street. It was really more disgusting than painful to hear her. My mother was always in tears, and grew daily weaker. She was evidently consumptive, but still we had to work together from morning till night to execute any orders we received

for sewing, embroidery, etc. This was a source of much displeasure to Anna Fédorovna : there should be no dressmaker's shop in her house, she would say. Still we were forced to buy clothes for ourselves, and it was essential we should have some money of our own for unavoidable expenses. We laid by all we could in the hope of some day being able to set up house by ourselves. But my mother's work robbed her of her little remaining strength and she grew worse every day. Disease seemed like a worm to be gnawing at her life's root, soon to bring her to the grave. And all this I saw only too clearly, I could never blind my eyes even for a moment.

Day followed day and each one seemed like the one before. We lived as quietly as we should have done in the country. As she gradually became convinced of her absolute power over us, Anna Fédorovna became less aggressive. In fact no one ever dreamed of contradicting her. Between her room and ours was half the whole length of the passage, but as I said before in the very next room to ours lived Pokrovski. He gave lessons to Sacha in French and German and also in history, geography and 'all the sciences' as Anna Fédorovna used to say. In return she gave him free board and lodging. Sacha was then thirteen, and a very intelligent child, though wayward and mischievous. Anna Fédorovna told my mother that she thought it would not be a bad plan for me to learn of him too, the rather because I had not learned

much at school. My mother agreed with much pleasure, and so, for a year, Sacha and I had lessons together from Pokrovski.

Our master was a very poor man whose health had not allowed of his continuing his studies at the university, and so it was only by courtesy that we called him a student. He was very quiet and inoffensive, and no sound ever reached our room from his. He was very peculiar looking, with an awkward gait, a hesitating address, and so funny a way of speaking that it made me laugh to look at him. Sacha was always poking fun at him, especially during lesson-time. And as he had an irritable temper, he would constantly get very angry with us, fly at us for the merest trifle, shout at us, scold us and finally cut short the lesson and go into his own room. There he would spend the whole day at his books. He had quite a large library among which were not a few valuable and rare volumes. Whenever it happened that he found himself with a little money, earned by giving lessons or in some other way, he would at once set out and spend it in books.

In time I grew to know him better, intimately even. He was the kindest and best of men, different indeed from any others I ever chanced to meet. My mother had a great regard for him, and he became afterwards my greatest friend, excepting herself.

At first, great girl as I was, I laughed at him in concert with Sacha and, for hours together, we two would rack our brains to invent some

new way of irritating him and taxing his patience. It was so easy to make him angry that we could not but be amused. (I am ashamed to think of it now.) Once when we had excited him to the very verge of tears I distinctly heard him mutter 'Spiteful children!' Suddenly I was covered with confusion. I was both ashamed of myself and pained for him. Distinctly do I remember getting red even to the tips of my ears and, with tears in my eyes, imploring him to be calm and not to heed our silly jests, but he shut up his book without finishing the lesson and left the room. I was full of remorse, for I could not bear the thought that by our unkindness we children had caused him tears. We had watched for them as it were, we had wished to make him cry and we had succeeded in teasing him till he could endure it no longer, we had made the poor fellow's hard life yet harder. All night I could not sleep for sorrow and remorse. Repentance is said to relieve sorrow of heart; it has quite the contrary effect on mine. I do not know how much of self-love there may have been in my grief, for I did not like to be treated as a child now that I was fourteen.

From that day, I was always endeavouring to devise some way of making Pokrovski alter his opinion of me: in my present state I could arrive at no decision and merely confined myself to making plans (God knows how wild those plans were!). But from that time I played no more tricks upon him with Sacha, and he

was no longer angry with us. To my self-love this seemed very insufficient.

And now I will say a few words about one of the very strangest, most pitiable men I have ever come across. I mention him here because, up to the time of which I have just spoken, I had not devoted any particular attention to him. But now, whatever concerned Pokrovski became suddenly interesting to me. Every now and then, there came to our house a white-haired old man, dirty, shabbily dressed, clumsy, maudlin, as funny an old fellow as ever you saw. At first sight he would strike one as ashamed of himself, apologetic, as it were. 'Why,' one wondered, 'does he shrink aside and twist his body about like this?' He had such curious tricks and made such odd faces that one could but think of him as half-witted. Sometimes he would come to the house, stand outside the glass doors of the portico, and not dare to pass through them. If either Sacha or I or one of the servants whom he knew to be kindly disposed towards him, came by, he would nod, and point to himself with various other signs, and, only if one nodded one's head to him and beckoned to him—the understood signal that there was no stranger in the house and that he was free to enter if he pleased—only then would the old man gently open the doors, beaming with joy, and, contentedly rubbing his hands, make his way on tiptoe to the room of Pokrovski. For he was his father.

Later on I learned the details of the poor old

man's history. He had been in government employ, had proved himself of no capacity and had filled some humble post, quite the least important one in his department. When his first wife (the mother of the student Pokrovski) died, he bethought himself of marrying again and chose a woman of middle-class origin. The new wife turned everything in the house topsy turvy, there was no living in it and moreover she squandered all the money. At this time her stepson was but ten years old, yet she hated him. Fortune, however, smiled on the little Pokrovski; the landowner Bikov, who knew the elder Pokrovski, and had already befriended him more than once, took the boy under his protection and placed him at a school. He took an interest in him from having known his mother, who, as a girl, had been loaded with benefits by Anna Fédorovna and by her given in marriage to the clerk Pokrovski. Bikov, an intimate friend of Anna Fédorovna's, had, in a fit of generosity, bestowed on the bride a dowry of five thousand roubles. No one ever knew how that money went. Such was the story related to me by Anna Fédorovna; but the student Pokrovski himself was always unwilling to speak of his family affairs. They say his mother was a very beautiful woman, and I have often wondered at her consenting to make so poor a marriage. She was quite young when she died, some four years afterwards.

From this first school, the young Pokrovski passed to another, and later to the university, for

Bikov, who often visited Petersburg, did not forget his *protégé*. When his health broke down and he was forced to discontinue his work at the university, Bikov introduced him to Anna Fédorovna, and gave him a recommendation so that he was taken into the house on the understanding that he should give Sacha what instruction she needed.

The elder Pokrovski was driven by his wife's cruelty to give himself up to the lowest vice and was scarcely ever sober. She used to beat him, make him live in the kitchen, and altogether treat him so shamefully that after a while he grew hardened to ill usage and ceased to complain of it. He was not really so very old, but, from his way of life, had become almost imbecile. The only remaining token of humanity in him was his boundless love for his son, who people said was as like his mother as one drop of water is like another. Was it not perhaps the recollection of his first wife's kindness which caused the unhappy old man to regard his son with so intense an affection? He was always talking about him, and came to pay him a visit twice a week with the utmost regularity. Very often, though, he did not dare come in, for the young Pokrovski could not endure his father's visits. Of all his faults, the chief and most conspicuous one was his disrespect for his father. Indeed a more trying old person can scarcely be imagined, for, in the first place, he was terribly inquisitive; in the second place, he was constantly interrupting his

son's work by asking foolish, puerile questions, and besides this he was frequently but half sober. The son attempted to cure his father of his idle curiosity and constant chattering, and at last the poor old man grew to listen to all his son said as though he were an oracle, and dared not so much as open his lips without leave.

Poor old fellow! he had never done admiring and contemplating his Petinka, as he called his son. When he came to see him he wore a pensive, subdued expression, evidently from being uncertain how he would be received; often he would linger some time before venturing in, and, if I happened to go by, he would detain me twenty minutes to inquire how Petinka was? Was he quite well? What mood was he in? Was he busy over anything important? His mind set at ease on all these points, the old man would at last decide on going in. He would turn the door handle gently, push the door open noiselessly and put in his head. Then, if he saw that his son was not displeased and that he nodded to him, he would go softly into the room, take off his cloak, and his hat which was always battered in and full of holes, and had a torn brim, hang them both upon a peg, seat himself carefully on the edge of a chair and never take his eyes off his son, but watch his every gesture in order to ascertain in what frame of mind his Petinka might be. If he discerned the slightest sign of ill-humour, he would rise and say, 'I have only come in for a minute,

Petinka. I have been for a long walk and came past the door, so I came in to rest.' Then, without another word, he would reach down his cloak and hat, and slip out of the door, forcing his lips to smile in order to disguise his bitter disappointment, and not to disgrace his son.

But if he were kindly received, he would be beside himself for joy. His contentment was reflected in his face, and in the liveliness of his gestures and gait. When his son addressed him, he would rise a little from his seat, and answer in a subdued almost respectful voice, always making use of carefully selected, and therefore absurdly high-flown expressions. But he had not the gift of language and he would grow terribly confused and seem not to know what to do with his hands, with his whole awkward self, and often he would, as it were, rehearse his next sentence, mumbling it over to himself, and endeavouring to correct some expression. If, by any rare chance, he happened to light on a suitable word he would strut about the room, pull down his waistcoat, and arrange his tie, with an air of complete satisfaction. Sometimes, indeed, his confidence in himself was such as to admit of his getting up from his chair, going to the book-shelf and reaching down a volume to read a few pages, be the book what it might. All this he accomplished with an air of assurance and indifference as though he were always accustomed thus to make free with his son's books, as though a

word of encouragement from his son were no unusual thing. But I have seen him quail when his son bade him leave the books alone. I have seen him hastily put the book back and place it upside down, then, in trying to put it right in his flurry, leave the edges outside. I have seen him smile timidly and grow red as fire as though he knew not how to atone for his crime. Certainly the son, by his advice, succeeded in partly curing his father of his bad habits, and, having seen him but half sober three times running, would give him a little present of money as a token of pardon on the occasion of his next visit. Sometimes, too, he would buy him boots, a new waistcoat, or a smart tie, and then the old man was as proud as any peacock of his finery. He came to see us pretty often, bringing gingerbread cocks and apples for Sacha and me, and would talk perpetually of Petinka. He would bid us pay great attention to his teaching, he would tell us what a good son he had, what an exemplary son, a son who knew twice as much as any one else. Then he would wink his left eye at us, and make such funny faces that we could not help laughing, and did so heartily. He was excessively fond of mamma, but he hated Anna Fédorovna, although, in her presence, the deepest water could not have been more still than he.

I very soon gave over learning from Pokrovski. As before, he persisted in treating me as a child on the same level with Sacha. This

was a great trouble to me, as I strained every nerve to atone for my former offences. But my efforts were quite unnoticed and this distressed me almost past endurance. When at lessons, I hardly ever addressed a word to my master, I could not. I would get red, confused, and then go and cry over my vexation in some corner by myself.

I do not know what would have come of all this if a curious circumstance had not helped to draw us nearer together. One evening when my mother happened to be sitting with Anna Fédorovna, I stole softly into Pokrovski's room. I knew that he was out, but I have no idea what led me to his room. Up to that time I had scarcely ever looked him in the face, although, for more than a year, we had lived next door to one another. And now my heart beat as though it were going to leap out of my bosom as I looked about me with curious interest. The room was poorly furnished and rather in disorder. Along the wall were nailed five long shelves loaded with books. Books lay in piles on both table and chairs, books and papers. A thought struck me and, oddly enough, a feeling of half angry resentment possessed me. It was as though my affection, my love were of no value to him. While he was learned, I was so ignorant; I had read nothing, hardly a single book. I cast an almost angry look at the shelves, bent under the weight of the books. My vexation, my annoyance, amounted almost to frenzy. I made a wild resolution to read his

books, every one of them, and that as soon as possible. I do not know, maybe I thought that by learning all he knew, I should become more worthy of being his friend. I flew at the nearest shelf unthinking, unhesitating and, putting out my hand, laid hold of the last book of the row. It was a dirty old tome, all falling to pieces, but, turning first red and then white and trembling with excitement and passion, I carried it off, resolved to read it that very evening, by the light of the night-light, while my mother slept.

But, great was my disgust, when, on entering our room and hastily opening the stolen volume, I found its pages to be half of them worm-eaten and its faded print to be in Latin character. Without loss of time, I retraced my steps. I had not restored the book to its place when I heard the sound of approaching footsteps in the passage. I hurried and grew impatient, but the tiresome books were so tightly packed that, when I took one out, its comrades closed up over the place and left no room. Finding I had not the strength to squeeze in the volume, I pushed those on either side with all my force, the rusty nail on which the shelf rested, and which had apparently waited until now on purpose for my undoing, broke short off and the books tumbled noisily to the ground. At that moment the door opened and Pokrovski entered.

Here I must tell you that he could not bear any one meddling with his property. Woe to that man who so much as touched his precious

books! Imagine then my dismay when books little and big, of all possible shapes, of all sizes and thicknesses, fell from the shelf, tumbled pell-mell on the floor, bounced under the table, under the chairs and all over the room. I tried to flee, but it was too late. It is all over with me, I thought, all over! I am ruined, undone. I have behaved like a child of ten! like a silly little girl! Pokrovski was indeed terribly angry.

‘What have you done now?’ he cried. ‘Are you not ashamed of playing such pranks? Pray leave the room at once!’ and here he threw himself on the ground and began to pick up his scattered treasures. I made a gesture as though to help him.

‘You need not trouble,’ he said, ‘it were better if you did not come where you are not wanted.’ But, somewhat softened apparently by my humble attitude, his tone altered to the gentler tone in which, as a master, he was accustomed to address me. ‘When are you going to grow more steady, less thoughtless? Surely there is no need for me to tell you that at fifteen you are no longer a little child.’ Then, as though to make sure I was no longer a little child he looked closer at me, and suddenly his cheek flushed. I was puzzled, and standing straight in front of him, stared him in the face. He got up from the ground and stood before me, apparently much confused, and muttered something which sounded like an excuse for having treated me as a child when I was so

tall. Then, I know not how, it flashed across me what he meant, and I too was confused, I stuttered, flushed redder than Pokrovski, and, covering my face with my hands, rushed from the room.

I knew not what to do, whither to go for very shame at his having discovered me in his room. For three days I dared not look at him. Strange, indistinct ideas ran in my head. One of the most insane was this: that I must run to him, explain my conduct, tell him all quite frankly and assure him that I had not gone to his room like a mischievous child, but with good intent. I had quite made up my mind to do this, but, thank God, my courage failed me. Fancy what I might have brought upon myself! I am ashamed to recall my plan even now.

A little while after, my mother suddenly became very ill. For two days she had not left her room, and on the third, she was in a high fever and delirious. For one whole night I had not slept, but had nursed my mother and, sitting by her bedside, had given her food and medicine at the appointed hours. By the next evening I was quite tired out, and I could hardly keep awake. Colours floated before my eyes, my head went round and I was ready to fall off my chair from weariness, yet every now and then the low moaning of my mother roused me. I shuddered, dozed off for a moment, and awoke shivering. I was in torment. I cannot recall its nature, but I know that some dreadful dream, some fearful vision visited my excited

fancy in the moment between waking and sleeping, and once more I awoke in terror. It was dark as the night-light flickered, then suddenly flared up and illuminated every corner of the room for a moment, soon to sink down again, shed a pale light upon the wall, and go out. Something had startled me, I was filled with dread, for my imagination had been stirred by the terrible dream, and my heart stood still for fear. I sprang from my seat, and my distress, my misery, found voice in an involuntary cry. Then the door opened and Pokrovski came in.

I remember how my spirits revived at his coming. He carefully set me down in an armchair, gave me a glass of water and overwhelmed me with anxious inquiries. I cannot remember what answers I made him. 'You are ill, you are very ill yourself,' he said, taking my hand in his, 'you are feverish and are ruining your health by want of care; try to get a little rest; lie down and in two hours' time I will awake you.' He would not allow of my uttering one word of protest, and, indeed, fatigue had robbed me of my little remaining strength and my eyes closed from utter exhaustion. I lay back in the chair meaning to sleep but half an hour, and I never woke till morning, when Pokrovski was careful to rouse me in time to give my mother her medicine.

The next evening when, having taken a little rest in the day, I was preparing to spend the night in the armchair by the bedside with a

determination not to go to sleep, Pokrovski knocked at our door at eleven o'clock. I opened to him. 'It is sad for you to sit up all alone,' he said, 'here is a book to read, It will make the time seem less long.' I cannot remember what book it was I took out of his hand, and, though I did not sleep all that night, I doubt whether I even opened it. A curious inner excitement kept me awake. I could not even sit still and several times I got up from my chair to pace the room. My heart was aglow with happiness, so glad was I at Pokrovski's having thought of me. I was proud of his anxiety and watchfulness, and my thoughts were of him all through that long night. Pokrovski did not come again, nor did I expect him, but I looked forward eagerly to the next evening.

On the night of the following day, after every one else had gone to bed, Pokrovski opened his door and, standing on the threshold of his own room, entered into conversation with me. I cannot recall one word of the many we exchanged, but I remember that I felt shy and awkward, and that I impatiently awaited the close of the interview, although I had looked forward to it with all my heart and had even dreamed of it. All day I had been busy preparing questions and answers. Our friendship dated from that evening, for, during the course of my mother's illness, we spent some hours of each evening together by my mother's bedside. I conquered my timidity by

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degrees, although, after each of our conversations, I had some reason to be vexed with myself. However, I was secretly delighted to find that, for my sake, he would even neglect his tiresome books. Once even it happened that we spoke laughingly of their fall from the shelf. It was a strange moment for both of us. I was really too frank and simple-minded, for passion and a curious eagerness moved me to tell him all: how I had had a wish to learn, to know at least something of all he knew, how it vexed me to be treated as a mere child . . . I was, I tell you, in a curious frame of mind, my heart failed me and my eyes filled with tears as I told him of my regard, of my wish to love him, to sympathise with him, to be a solace to him. He looked closely at me as though perplexed, but he said never a word, and, of a sudden, I felt terribly hurt and disappointed, for I thought he rejected my love and that perhaps he was secretly amused at it. So, like a child, I burst out sobbing and, losing all self-control, was shaken by a very paroxysm of grief. But he laid hold of my hands and kissed them, holding them to his breast while he soothed me with kind words. He was very much moved, but I cannot recall what words of his they were which made me smile and then break out crying afresh. I blushed very red indeed, and could not speak for joy. Spite of my own emotion, I noticed an agitation and restraint in Pokrovski's manner. He seemed quite overcome with wonder at my

passion, my enthusiasm, my vehement affection. It may be that, at first, it was chiefly his interest that was aroused but, later on, all doubt passed away and gave place to a feeling for me as pure and disinterested as mine for him, which enabled him to respond to my eager words, my fondness, kindly, lovingly as a dear friend or brother. My heart glowed with happiness, and I never attempted to conceal my feelings from him, while he grew fonder of me every day.

I really cannot remember what we talked of together during these hours, painful indeed and yet how sweet; when we met and whispered together in the dimly lit room by the bedside of my poor mother. We spoke of anything that occurred to us at the time, we told of all that was in our hearts, and which we longed to express, and we were very nearly happy. Oh! what a sad and yet what a joyous time that was! It makes me both glad and sorry to recall it. Memories, be they painful or pleasant, always make one sad, at least it seems so to me; yet there is joy in the very sadness! And when the heart is heavy, faint, cast-down, these memories refresh it, as, on a damp evening, the drops of dew revive the poor drooping blossoms, parched by the heat of the noon-day sun.

My mother recovered slowly, but I still sat by her bedside in the evenings. Pokrovski often lent me books to read, and at first I read them merely in order to keep awake, but later on with more attention and soon even with avidity. Around me there seemed to grow up a

whole world of things hitherto unnoticed. New thoughts, new feelings even, overflowed my mind like a swelling stream; the faster the flow, the greater the tumult within me, and it cost me some effort to receive the new impressions which excited me in proportion as they were delightful. They would hustle each other in my mind until there seemed to be no breathing space and I was unequal to the effort of reducing this chaos to order. That the mental strain did not unhinge me completely, I owe to the fact that I am, by nature, too much of a dreamer.

When my mother was really convalescent, we no longer had the same opportunities of meeting and having long talks together, but of course there was nothing to hinder us from exchanging a few words occasionally, and though they were often quite trifling ones, I loved to give to each a peculiar value such as I alone understood. My life was no longer empty and I was happy with a calm, quiet happiness. So the weeks sped by.

One day we had a visit from the elder Pokrovski. He chattered away, seemed in unusual spirits and became more and more garrulous. He laughed and joked in his old way, and at length let out the reason for his excitement by telling us that in a week's time his Petinka's birthday would come round, that he invariably paid his son a visit on that day, that he had a new waistcoat ready to wear on the occasion and that his wife had promised him a new pair of boots. In fact the old fellow was in a state of serene con-

tentment and chattered to us of all that came into his head.

His birthday! The thought of it left me no peace by night or by day, for I was determined to remind him of our friendship and give him a present. But what? I finally resolved that I would give him some books. I knew that he very much wished to have the last edition of Puschkin's complete works, so Puschkin I resolved to buy. I had thirteen roubles of my own, earned by my needle. They had been put aside to buy me a new frock. So I despatched our old cook Matrena to inquire the price of a complete Puschkin. Alas! she brought me word that, inclusive of the cost of binding, the books would cost at least sixteen roubles. Where should I get the money? I thought and thought without result. I would not ask my mother for it though I knew she would gladly have helped me, for then every one in the house would know of our present, which would seem like a return for Pokrovski's kindness of the last year, and I wished my present to be entirely mine and unheard of by other people, while, for his trouble, I preferred to be always indebted to him and to make no return beyond my friendship. At last I thought I saw a way out of the difficulty.

I knew that from the second-hand book-sellers in the market one could often procure books at half the published price, and very nearly, or even quite as good as new, by striking a bargain. So I made up my mind

to go there, and it came about easily enough in this way. On the very next day there were some household things needed both by us and by Anna Fédorovna. My mother was not well, Anna Fédorovna most opportunely lazy, so the execution of the commissions devolved on me, and I set out for the market with Matrena.

I was fortunate enough to come across a well bound copy of Puschkin almost directly. I began bargaining. At first the bookseller asked an even higher price than the shop, but then, though not without difficulty, and, but by dint of returning to the charge several times, I succeeded in reducing his demands to ten silver roubles. How I enjoyed haggling! Poor Matrena, who was not in the secret, was at her wits' end to know what I wanted with so many books. But alas! my whole capital amounted to thirteen paper roubles, and the bookseller seemed determined not to accept a lower price. At last I began to entreat, to implore, and again he came down, but only by two roubles and a half, and this time he swore that he only did it to please me, because I was 'such a nice young lady,' but that he would have done it for no one else. A reduction of two and a half roubles still did not bring the books within my reach, and I was ready to cry from vexation. But an unlooked-for circumstance helped me over the difficulty.

Not far off, at another bookstall, I caught sight of old Pokrovski. Round him buzzed four or five hawkers, confusing and worrying him

out of his life ; each one held out his wares, and asked him how much he would give, what he wanted. The poor old fellow stood in their midst like one dazed, and knew not what book to take of all that were offered him. I went up and enquired what brought him there. He was overjoyed at the sight of me, for he was perhaps fonder of me than of any one save his Petinka. 'I am going to buy some books, Varvara Alexievna,' he answered, 'I am going to buy some books for Petinka. His birthday is drawing near, and he loves books, so I want to buy some for him.' The old man always spoke funnily, but doubly so now that he was in such perplexity. Of what use was it for him to inquire prices, when he had but two or three silver roubles of his own : nor did he even so much as ask how much the larger books cost, but only looked at them longingly, took hold of them, turned over the leaves with his finger, and soon put them back again. 'No, no,' he muttered, 'These would be too dear, but perhaps I shall find something among these,' and he began turning over some thin pamphlets, chiefly song-books and almanacks, which were marked at very low prices.

'What do you want with such books as those?' I asked him. 'They are only rubbish.'

'Oh, no,' he exclaimed, 'see, these are quite nice books, very pretty little books.' The last words were so sadly spoken, there was such a break in his voice, that I thought he was going to cry over his disappointment at finding good

books cost so much, and I even fancied I saw a tear fall from his cheek and trickle down his poor red old nose. I asked what money he had by him, and he showed me all he had, wrapped up in a greasy piece of newspaper. There were but two small silver coins and a handful of kopecks. I at once drew him towards my friend's bookstall.

'See,' I cried, pointing to the Puschkin, 'those eleven volumes cost but thirty-two roubles and a half. I have thirty, if you will give two and a half, we will buy the books, and give them to him between us. The old fellow was quite overcome with delight, and at once handed his money to the bookseller, who in return loaded him with the set of volumes, which seemed quite a library in itself. The old man's pockets were stuffed with books, and he carried the rest under his arm and in his hand. Promising me faithfully to bring them to me the very next day, he set off home.

Accordingly, on the morrow, the father paid the son a visit, sat as usual but a few minutes with him, and then came on to us and greeted me with a comical air of mystery. Smiling, he rubbed his hands with glee at being master of a secret and informed me that the books were in the corner of the kitchen, in Matrena's safe keeping. After this our conversation confined itself to the approaching anniversary; the old man expatiated upon how we should offer our gift, and the more he became involved in his subject, the more evident it was to me that

there was something in his mind, which he did not dare express. I waited in silence. An inward joy, a secret satisfaction, made me the more ready to excuse his funny gesticulations, his sly winks, etc. He grew more restless with every moment, and at last it was as though he could bear it no longer.

‘Listen!’ he said in a low voice, ‘listen, Varvara Alexeievna—do you know, Varvara Alexeievna,’—poor old man he grew terribly confused. ‘When his birthday comes round, will you give him ten volumes as your present, and let me give him the eleventh as mine? Like this, you will have a present to give, and so shall I.’ There he paused as though for my answer.

‘But, Zachar Petrovitch, why should we not give them all together in the name of us both?’

‘But, Varvara Alexeievna, I would rather—’ and again the old man paused and grew very red. He stood still as though rooted to the spot, and then tried to explain himself as follows:

‘You see, Varvara Alexeievna, I am sometimes very miserable; in fact, let me tell you, that I am nearly always unhappy. I have that to bear which is hardly to be borne, the bitter cold out of doors, for instance, and other things even worse than this. Sometimes life seems quite unendurable to me, and I get drunk, this displeases Petinka very much. So he is angry with me, Varvara Alexeievna, he

scolds me, and reads me a lecture on morals. So I wish this present of mine to prove to him that I am improving, and trying to behave better. I have had to save up for a long time in order to buy him a book, for I scarcely ever have any money unless Petinka happens to give me some. He knows this, so now he will see that whatever I have, I spend on him.'

I was full of pity for the old man, and it did not take me long to make up my mind. He watched me anxiously. 'You shall give them all, Zachar Petrovitch!' I said.

'How do you mean? All? All the volumes?'

'Yes, all.'

'And what will you give from yourself?'

'From myself?'

'Yes! in your own name?'

'Well! in my own name . . . ' Surely I had expressed myself sufficiently clearly, but for a long time he could not understand me.

'Yes!' he said thoughtfully, 'that will be very nice, very nice of course, but what will you give, Varvara Alexeievna?'

'I shall not give anything.'

'What?' he cried almost startled, 'You will give Petinka nothing? Do you not wish to give him anything at all?'

He seemed horrified at the bare idea, and he was almost willing to renounce accepting my offer, in order that I might have something to give his son. What a simple soul he had in some ways! I assured him that I should have

been pleased to give his son a present, but was unwilling to deprive him of the pleasure.

‘If you are pleased, and your son is pleased,’ I explained, ‘I shall be pleased too; for, secretly, in my own mind, I shall feel that I have actually given him a present.’ This quite satisfied the old man, and he stayed two hours longer with us. He was too much excited to sit still, but got up, made a great noise, joked with Sacha, squeezed my hand on the sly, and made faces behind the back of Anna Fédorovna, who at last drove him out of the house. In a word, he was beside himself with a joy, purer, perhaps, than any he had ever known before.

On the birthday, he made his appearance punctually at eleven, straight from church, in a neatly darned dress coat, and wearing actually the new waistcoat and new boots. In each hand he carried a bundle of books. It was Sunday, and we were all sitting in Anna Fédorovna’s room drinking coffee. He began his speech by saying that Puschkin was a great poet, and then, stammering and hesitating, he went on to remark, that it was a good thing for a man to live a good life, for, if he did not, he would fall into bad health; then bad inclinations would certainly torment him, and tend to his destruction; he even went so far as to enumerate various injurious kinds of self-indulgence, and ended by saying that, for his part, he had become quite steady for some time past, and was now exemplary in his conduct. He said he

had always acknowledged the justice of his friends' reproofs, that he had hidden them in his heart, and could now prove it by offering these books, bought with money which he had hoarded for a long time out of his son's presents.

I could hardly refrain from laughter and tears as I listened to the old man: how glibly the old rascal could lie when it served his turn! The books were placed on a shelf in Pokrovski's room, and I could see that he at once guessed the truth. The old man was invited to dinner and we were all very happy that day. Dinner over, we played at forfeits. Sacha played about and I kept close at her side. Pokrovski was very attentive to me, and sought every opportunity for a *tête-à-tête*, but I gave him none. That was the happiest day of those four years.

From this time, though my memories are all painful ones, I enter upon the history of my darkest days. That is perhaps the reason why my pen travels so slowly, and almost refuses to write more. That is what induced me, it may be, to dwell so lovingly on every detail of my life during my days of happiness. How short those days were! They gave place to a time of such misery, such sorrow that God only sees the end of it.

My misfortunes began with Pokrovski's illness and death.

He fell ill two months after the events I have just narrated. During those two months he was always fretting about his means of earning a livelihood, for, until that time, he had had no settled

occupation. Like all consumptive people, he hoped on to the very last that a long life was before him. He was offered a situation as tutor, but he seemed to have a distaste for that profession. His health was too uncertain to allow of his obtaining a government appointment, and besides he would have had to wait so long before any pay was due to him. In fact, on every side, he met with failure and disappointment and this embittered him. He grew visibly weaker but he gave no heed to his failing health. Autumn came on. Every day he went out in his thin coat to seek employment, to ask, even to implore, for a situation, which was in itself a terrible trial to one so proud. He would return with wet feet, and clothes soaked through with rain, and at last one day he lay down on his bed never to rise from it again. He died in late autumn, at the end of October.

I scarcely ever left his room during the time of his illness, I nursed him, waited on him. Often I sat up all night. He was very seldom conscious, often delirious, and would talk of God knows what: of his situation, of his books, of me, of his father, and I learned many things about his circumstances then, of which hitherto I had neither known nor dreamed. At first people glanced curiously at me, and Anna Fédorovna would shake her head, but I looked them all straight in the face, and I think they soon ceased to think unkindly of my attention to Pokrovski. Certainly my mother was not displeased.

Sometimes, but rarely, Pokrovski recognised me. He was unconscious most of the day, and sometimes, the whole night through, he seemed to be conversing with some one: the words were mysterious, indistinct, and his hoarse voice would sound through the darkness of his room as though one spoke from the grave, and make me shiver with dread. On the last night especially he was in wild delirium and seemed to suffer terribly both in mind and body, for his moans cut me to the heart. The household were all in dismay. Anna Fédorovna prayed God to take him quickly. The doctor was summoned and said the sick man would certainly not live through the morning.

Old Pokrovski spent the whole night in the passage outside his son's door, where he had been given a mat to sleep on. He was constantly in and out of the room and his despair was terrible to witness. He was struck down by a grief which seemed to have robbed him of all power of feeling or thought. His head shook with emotion. His whole frame trembled and he kept muttering to himself as though he were engaged in an argument. I quite thought he was going mad.

Before the dawn, however, the old man, worn out by anguish of mind, lay asleep on his mat like one dead, and at eight o'clock I awoke him, for his son was sinking. Strange to say I could not weep though my heart was breaking.

But it was during my friend's last moments that I suffered most acutely. He asked some-

thing of me over and over again in his poor failing voice, and not one word could I distinguish of all he uttered. How my heart ached for him! For a whole hour he lay restless, muttering to himself, and struggling to make some sign with his poor, chill fingers, then in hoarse, low tones he seemed entreating me for something. But still his words were but inarticulate sounds and I failed to catch their meaning. One by one I led the members of the household to his side, I gave him to drink; but still he shook his head. Then at last I understood. He wished me to draw aside the curtain and open the shutters. Evidently he longed to gaze one last time on the day, on God's light, on the sun. I pulled back the curtain: but the dawning day was cheerless as the failing life of the dying man. There was no sunshine: clouds covered the face of the sky like a winding sheet and the weather was both depressing and damp. Fine rain pattered against the window and little streams of turbid water trickled down the panes. The light of the dawn was so dim as scarcely to light the room or extinguish the glimmer of the little lamp which burned before the *ikon*. Sadly, pitifully, the dying man glanced up at me and moved his head from side to side. A moment later he breathed his last.

Anna Fédorovna made all the arrangements for the funeral. A plain cheap coffin was bought and a drayman hired to convey it to the church and cemetery. Anna Fédorovna seized all Pokrovski's books and effects in

repayment for the funeral expenses. The old father was furious with her, stormed at her, snatched from her as many of the books as he could carry, stuffed his pockets with them, laid them in his hat, carried them about with him for three days, and would not part with them even when it was time to go to the church. During those three days he was like one in a dream, like one possessed, and, with strange officious care, lingered round the coffin, now arranging a wreath, now lighting or putting out a candle. It was evidently impossible for him to collect his thoughts. On the day of the funeral neither my mother nor Anna Fédorovna attended church, mamma was ill, and Anna Fédorovna was busy putting the house straight, and, having quarrelled with old Pokrovski, stayed at home. There was no one present save the father and myself. I could hardly stand through the service. Presently the undertaker's men closed the coffin, screwed down the lid, put it on the cart, and drove off. I only followed it as far as the end of the street. The driver set off at a trot. The old man ran after him, crying loudly, the effort of running shaking and interrupting his sobs. The poor old fellow lost his hat, and did not stop to pick it up. His head was wet with rain, the wind buffeted him, the sleet beat upon his face, but his grief was too great for him to notice the weather as he ran weeping, first on one side of the cart, and then on the other. His old coat-tails waved like wings upon the breeze. Books bulged out of

all his pockets, and, in his hands, he carried another huge volume which he never let go. Passers-by doffed their hats and crossed themselves. Others stopped to stare at the poor old mourner. Every now and then a book would fall out of his pocket into the mud. Then he would be stopped and informed of his loss : he would pick it up and start off again in pursuit of the coffin. At the corner of the street the cart stopped to take up another coffin, that of some poor woman. At last it turned the corner, and was hidden from my eyes. I returned home, and threw myself in terrible distress on my mother's bosom. I clasped her to me with all my might, kissed her, and burst out sobbing, timidly nestling close to her as though fearful of letting go my last friend from my embrace, lest death should rob me of her also. And indeed my dear mother lived but a short time longer.

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END OF VARVARA'S STORY.

NINTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 11

How grateful I am to you for taking me for a walk on the island ¹ yesterday, Mákar Alexeie-

¹ The public park of Petersburg.

E

vitch ! How fresh and pleasant it was there, how green ! It was so long since I had seen any verdure ; when I was ill I thought I was going to die, that life was over for me, so imagine all I felt yesterday, how much I enjoyed myself ! Do not be cross with me because I was downcast towards evening ; I felt very well, very happy, but in my best moments I am seldom high-spirited. And, as to my crying, that is only nonsense, I don't know myself what makes me weep. Not being quite strong yet, I am easily excited, and still something of an invalid. The cloudless pale sky, the sunset, the evening stillness, all this, I know not why, affected me, and moreover, yesterday I was in a mood for sad impressions so that my heart overflowed and tears relieved me. Why do I write all this to you ? All this is hard to tell one's own heart and still harder to repeat to another. But you, perhaps, understand me. How kind you are to me in sorrow or in joy, Mákar Alexeievitch ! Yesterday you looked into my very eyes in order to read my feelings and you rejoiced to see my delight. Trees, avenues, stretches of water, there they lay before us decked with beauty, and you enjoyed showing them to me as much as if they had been your own property. This proves what a kind heart yours is, Mákar Alexeievitch. I love you for this. Well, good-bye ! I am ill again to-day ; I got my feet wet yesterday and caught cold : Fédora is also unwell, so we are both ailing. Do not forget me, and come and see us soon.—Yours,

V. D.

TENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

June 12th

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I quite expected that you would have written me some verses after yesterday and lo! you write me but half a sheet-full of prose. Let me add though that your little note, short as it is, is unusually well, even charmingly written. Nature, the different country scenes and your own feelings, all these are most charmingly described. Alas! I have no such talent! I might scribble over ten pages and no good would come of it, for I cannot describe. I have tried to do so before now. You sing my praises, cousin mine, you say I am kind, harmless, incapable of doing any man an injury, one who discerns the goodness of God as displayed in nature. All this is true, perfectly true, dear; but, when I read these words of yours, I cannot help feeling, and then, if I be not on my guard, there ensue wearisome dissertations. But now, listen while I tell you of my past, cousin mine.

I was, at the most, but seventeen years of age when I joined the service, and now the thirtieth year of my official career is approaching. Well, I donned the uniform gladly; grew taller, grew wiser, saw a good many people. I distinguished myself so much that once I was recommended for the cross. You may not believe me, but I speak truly, I am not one to boast. Then what hindered me from getting on?

you ask, and I answer: certain wicked persons. I tell you, little cousin, I may be an obscure, stupid fellow, but I have a heart like any other. Shall I relate what harm one wicked man did me? It is not fit for your ears! You ask me why he did it? Because I loved peace, because I was gentle, because I was kindly! This did not please him, and this is what he did. At first he would merely say: 'Mákar Alexeievitch is an oddity, you know.' Then, 'No need to ask whether it was Mákar Alexeievitch!' and finally: Oh! of course it was Mákar Alexeievitch!' So you see what happened; Mákar Alexeievitch was blamed for everything, the name of Mákar Alexeievitch became a proverb throughout the whole department. Nor did they merely make my name a proverb and almost a word of derision, they made fun also of my uniform, my boots, my hair, my figure, they found fault with everything about me! And this over and over again and every day. I am used to it, because I can grow used to anything and I am a peaceable little fellow, but why should all this be? Whom have I ever injured? Did I ever deprive any man of his grade? Did I ever tell any tales to those in authority? Did I ever curry favour? Did I ever form a cabal? You are too kind to think such things of me. Then why has all this befallen me? Surely you can see for yourself that I am not prone to cunning and intrigue. God only knows why I have been so beset. You think me a deserving man and you are incom-

parably better than they all, Varinka. See what a petty thing is public virtue. In the course of conversation the other day, Eustace Ivanovitch said, that that man was the greatest public benefactor who understood making most money. He said in joke (I know it was in joke!) that morality consisted in being a burden to nobody; and surely I am dependent on no one! I have a hunch of bread of my own; it is certainly but a plain hunch of bread, and even black bread, but it is hardly, honestly earned, legally mine, and no one has a right to deprive me of it. Of course I know that this copying is not work which requires much skill, but still I am proud of it, for work it is, and even hard work. What possible objection can there be to my copying? Does it hurt anybody? 'He is but a copyist!' forsooth! And pray what is there to be ashamed of in that? The letters leave my hands so legible, so fair and pleasant to look upon, that his Excellency is satisfied and gives me his most important ones to copy. Of course I know that I have no style that my composition is execrable. That is why I have never been promoted and why I write so simply to you, cousin mine, without skill and just as my heart dictates. All this I know very well, but if everyone had the gift of composition who would be left to do the copying? There is a question for you, my darling, to answer! At all events I have the satisfaction of knowing that I am useful, indispensable even, and that I have not been ousted by the mockery of my

fellows. They say I am like a rat. Well, if I am, the rat is wanted, there is a use for him, he does very well and is worth his wages. So, well done, the rat! Enough of this, little cousin, I never meant to mention it to you, but I was a little ruffled. One enjoys speaking up for one's-self now and then. Good-bye, my kind little comforter! I will not fail to pay you a visit soon. Meanwhile do not let the time seem long. I will bring you a book to read. Good-bye, Varinka.—Your sincere well-wisher,
MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.

ELEVENTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 20

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I hasten to write at once although I have work to finish within a given time. You shall see the reason of my haste. There is a chance of your making a good bargain. Fédora tells me that an acquaintance of hers has a suit of uniform in excellent condition to sell: breeches, waistcoat and cap, all complete and going very cheap: I think you ought to buy it. You are not so very badly off now, for you have money by you, so you say. Do not grudge the outlay, I beseech you. You really need these things. Look how shabby are the clothes you are now wearing. For shame! You are positively in rags. And in spite of all you may say to the

contrary, you have not your new uniform. Of this I am quite certain. What you did with it, God only knows! So buy this one, if only to please me. You do it for my sake. Buy it if you love me!

To-day you send me a present of linen. You will certainly be a bankrupt before long! I am really quite ashamed when I think how much money I have cost you. You are fond of squandering money, Mákar Alexeievitch. I really stood in no need of this, I could quite well have done without it. I am so sure of your affection for me that there is no need of your proving it by loading me with presents. I do not like accepting them, knowing how much, how very much, they cost you. Once for all, I have plenty of all I want. Do you hear me, Mákar Alexeievitch? I implore you to listen. You ask me to send you the sequel of my manuscript. Do you wish me to go on with it? I cannot think how I even got so far. I am really not strong enough now to tell you more about my past: I do not wish even to think of it, so painful is it to me to dwell upon my recollections. To speak for instance, of my mother, who was forced to leave her poor child at the mercy of that monster, this is the most bitter memory of all. My heart bleeds when I recall it. The memory of it all is still so fresh that I cannot bear to touch upon it although it is now more than a year ago. Besides, you know the whole story.

I told you about Anna Fédorovna's present

frame of mind: she accuses me of ingratitude and repudiates any allusion to a connection between herself and Mr. Bikov! She bids me go to her, says I am living on charity, and have fallen into bad ways. She promises that, if I go back to her, she will manage matters with Bikov and compel him to atone for the injury he has done me. She says that Bikov is himself anxious to give me a dowry. But enough of them! I, for my part, am happy here with you and my kind Fédora, whose devotion puts me in mind of that of my old nurse. You are but a distant relation, it is true, but your reputation suffices for my protection. And as for those people I do not know them. I mean if possible to forget them. What can they want of me, I wonder? Fédora declares that all this is mere tittle-tattle and that at last they really mean to leave me in peace. God grant it!

V. D.

TWELFTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

June 21

MY DARLING!—I want to write to you and do not know what I have to tell you. This is not to be wondered at, now that we see so much of one another. I may add that I was never in all my life as happy as I am now. I feel as though God had blessed me with a house and family of my own! Are you not as dear to me

as a daughter? Why do you make such a fuss about the clothes I sent you? That you were in need of them, I learned from Fédora. And it gives me such pleasure to supply your needs, Varinka, and, since it pleases me, will you not let me do it? Do not hinder me and cross me now, for I am happier than I ever was before. It is as though I were going to live at last. In the first place because, now that you live so close by and under my care, I have company and am no longer lonely. In the second place, because one of my fellow lodgers has invited me to have tea with him to-day. It is no other than that very Ratazaev, in whose room the authors come together. There is a gathering to-night and we shall have a lecture on literature. What do you say to that? I have written all this merely to show you in what good spirits I am. Theresa tells me you bid her let me know of your wanting some embroidery silk. I will buy you some, my darling. To-morrow I hope to bring you just what you want. I know where to buy it.—I remain your sincere friend,

MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.

THIRTEENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

June 22

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I have to tell you of a very sad event which has just

taken place in our house: the death, namely, at five this morning, of Gorschkov's little son. I do not know exactly of what complaint, but I think it was scarlatina. I have been to see the Gorschkovs. How poor they seem and how untidy their room! And no wonder, for the whole family live in it, though, for decency's sake, they divide it by screens. The coffin stood in the room, a plain coffin but pretty enough considering they bought it ready-made. The boy was eleven years old and a promising child, they say. It was sad to see them all, Varinka. The poor mother did not cry but looked oh! so sorrowful. It is perhaps better for them really, since it is one burden less for their shoulders to bear; and they have two more children; an infant in arms and a little girl of some six years. What pleasure could it be to them indeed to watch the child suffer, their own little child, and be powerless to relieve it? The father in a shabby old coat sat silently by on a broken chair. Tears poured down his cheeks, but they may not have been tears of sorrow, for he suffers from weak eyes. He is a strange man. If one addresses him he turns fiery red and seems confused as though he knew not how to answer. Leaning up against the coffin stood the little girl, with such a piteous, thoughtful expression on her face, Varinka. I do not like to see a child look thoughtful, it makes me so sad. At her feet lay her rag doll; she did not play with it, but, with her little finger in her mouth,

stood silent and motionless. The landlady gave her a cake and she took it but could not eat. Is it not sad, Varinka?

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FOURTEENTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 25

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I return you your book. It is not a nice one! It is one such as you should not even touch. Where ever did you get such a gem? Joking apart, surely you cannot like such a book, Mákar Alexeivitch? I have been promised a book to read within a few days and, if you like, I will pass it on to you. Now, good-bye, I have nothing more to say.

V. D.

FIFTEENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

June 26

DEAREST VARINKA,—To tell the truth, I had really not read that book myself. I certainly began it, but, after reading a few pages, I thought it seemed nonsense, written in fun to make people laugh; 'well,' I thought, 'at any rate it is amusing, and may please Varinka,' so I sent it on to you at once.

But now Ratazaev promises to lend me

something to read which is really literature, so you shall not want for books, little cousin. Ratazaev is a clever fellow, and understands such things. He writes himself, oh! how well he writes! with such a flowing pen, and such a style that, though he makes use of quite ordinary trivial words, such as I or Theresa or Faldony might use, he gives them style. I have been to a party in his room. He read aloud to us for some four or five hours, and we smoked while we listened. The book he read was very charming, all full of flowers as it were, every page was a perfect bouquet. How affable, how kind, how gracious he is! What am I compared with him? Nobody. He is a man of note, and I?—simply non-existent. Yet he condescends to me. I am doing some copying for him. And do not imagine, for one instant, that he is playing me a trick, and makes much of me in order that I may do the copying. No! I do the copying of my own free will, by my own wish, and, if he condescends to use it, it does not prove that his kindness to me has any ulterior motive. I appreciate the delicacy of his conduct. He is a kind, a very kind man, and an incomparable writer.

If anything be very well written, Varinka, it is literature. I learned this the day before yesterday. What a wonderful thing literature is, which, consisting but of printed words, is able to invigorate, to instruct the hearts of men! All this, and more like it, I read in a book

at Ratazaev's. It seemed very well written ! Literature is a kind of picture ; indeed, one may say it is both a picture and a mirror ; passions, expression, are alike reflected in it, while at one time it gives voice to refined criticism, at another, edifies and instructs. All this I have merely borrowed. I tell you frankly, my dear, that, when I sit among them listening (for at least I can smoke as well as they !) and they begin to argue and quarrel about different subjects, I sit by silently and take no part in the conversation. There I sit like a blockhead ashamed of myself, and endeavouring, the whole evening through, to put in at least one little sentence upon the subject under discussion, and, when I succeed, how inane, how forced my words sound ! Then I am so sorry, Varinka, that I am so incapable, that, as they say, I grew up in body but not in mind. See ! what do I do in my spare time now ? I take a nap, fool that I am ! How pleasant it must be to be able to employ one's-self instead of wasting the time in sleep ; to be able to sit down and write. It would be both profitable to myself, and a pleasure to others. See how much money these authors can earn. Look at Ratazaev for instance. What trouble can it be to him to write a page ? He can write five a day, and they pay him three hundred roubles a page. Here an anecdote, there some curious fact, why, let me see, we should soon be putting thousands in our pocket. Only think of this, Varinka : he had a little book of poems, quite

short poems, and for these he asked seven thousand, think of it, Varinka, seven thousand! Is it not quite a fortune? Well, they offered him five thousand, and he refused. I tried to reason with him and said: 'Sir, take the five thousand and be rid of them.' He said, 'No, the rascals should give him seven thousand.' Is not that genius?

Here is a little passage from his *Italian Passion* (that is the title of his book) which I have transcribed for you. Read it and judge for yourself:

'Vladimir trembled, furious passion coursed through his veins, and his blood boiled . . .

"Countess," he cried, "Countess! Do you know how terrible is my passion, that I am reckless, mad? No! my dreams did not deceive me! I love, I love intensely, rapturously, wildly, madly! All your husband's blood would not suffice to quench the frenzied rapture of my soul. No obstacle can arrest the all-consuming fire, hot as that of hell, which burns in my tortured bosom. O Zenaida, Zenaida!"

"Vladimir!" whispered the countess, beside herself, and leaning upon his arm.

"Zenaida!" cried Smieloski rapturously.

'He drew a long, last breath. The flame leapt high and clear on the altar of love, and pierced the breasts of the unhappy pair.

"Vladimir!" whispered the countess in ecstasy. Her bosom heaved, her cheek paled, her eyes gleamed.

'The terrible strange nuptials were completed . . .

'Half an hour later, the old count entered his wife's boudoir.

"Well, my love," he said, tapping her cheek, "is it not time you ordered the *samovar* to be got ready for our beloved guest?"

What do you think of this, my darling? what do you think, now that you have read some of his writings? Of course it is a little audacious, that it is most certainly, but surely it is beautifully written. Now, let me give you an extract from his novel, *Jermak and Zuleika*.

You must know, my dearest, that the Cossack Jermak, the fierce, formidable conqueror of Siberia, fell in love with Zuleika, the daughter of the Siberian prince Kutschum, whom he had taken prisoner. The action takes place, as you see, in the days of Ivan the Terrible. Here is a dialogue between Jermak and Zuleika :

"Thou lovest me, Zuleika! Oh let me hear thee say it again, again?"

"I love thee, Jermak!" whispered Zuleika.

"Heaven and Earth! I thank you both! I am happy. You have bestowed on me all that my passionate heart desired in my boyish days. Thou, my guiding star, hast led me so far, and for this even to the Stony Circle. I will exhibit my Zuleika before the whole world, and the nations, dumb with wonder at her marvellous beauty, will not venture to deride me. Oh! could these sufferings of mine but

be in any measure entered into by their boorish souls! Were they but capable as I am of discerning a whole poem in one little tear of my Zuleika's! Oh, allow me to staunch that tear with kisses, to drink that tear, that heavenly tear, my angel!"

'But Zuleika answered, "Jermak, the world is hard, mankind unjust. They will chase you away, they will condemn you, my beloved Jermak! What will a poor maid do who has been reared amid her native Siberian snows, in her father's tent, in your cold, icy, heartless, selfish world? They will not receive me, my dear one, my sweet-heart!"

"Then the Cossack's sword shall be drawn and shall whistle among them," cried Jermak, his eyes flashing furiously.'

And how do you suppose Jermak bore it, Varinka, when he learned that Zuleika had been murdered? The blind old man Kutschum, taking advantage of the darkness of night, concealed himself in Jermak's tent in his absence and slew his daughter, wishing to deal Jermak, who had deprived him of crown and sceptre, a deadly blow.

"Sharpen me a blade," cried Jermak, frenzied with rage, and whetting his knife on the sacred stone, "I must have their blood! I must hew them in pieces!"

And then, after all, Jermak, unable to live after the death of his Zuleika, casts himself into the Irtisch and so ends the tale.

Well, and here is an example of his humour,

a passage in a lighter vein, written only to amuse.

‘Do you know Ivan Prokofevitch? I mean the one who bit Prokofia Ivanovitch in the leg. Ivan Prokofevitch is a man of strong character and rare good qualities. Prokofia, on the other hand, is very fond of radishes and honey.¹ Well, one day when they were with their friend Pelagia Antonovna . . . but surely you know Pelagia Antonovna, who always wears her petticoat wrong side out?’

Is not that really humorous, Varinka? We simply shook with laughter when he read it to us. He is very playful and mischievous, God knows. But, although he is such a wag, and perhaps too fond of a joke, still he is kindly, and quite innocent of any free-thinking tendencies or radical notions, for our Ratazaev is a very well conducted man, and distinguishes himself in this as in other respects.

Sometimes the idea actually comes into my head: how would it be if I wrote something? I wonder! Fancy, for instance, if, suddenly, unexpectedly, a book appeared called: *Poems by Mákar Djevuschkin*! What would you say to that, Varinka mine? In what light would it strike you? For my part, I know that, if I brought out a book, I should never venture to show my face on the banks of the Neva. How should I feel with everyone pointing at me and

¹ There is a play on the words here which cannot be rendered in English.

saying : there is the author, Djevuschkin, or there goes the poet Djevuschkin himself. And oh ! what should I do about my boots ? For you must know, Varinka, that they are nearly always full of holes and just now the state of the soles is simply disgraceful. How could I bear for everyone to know that the poet Djevuschkin had ragged boots ? It might even come to the knowledge of some countess or duchess and what would she think ? Perhaps indeed she might not notice. I imagine that countesses have other things to think of besides boots, particularly a clerk's boots (for there are of course boots *and* boots), but my own friends might betray me. Ratazaev, for instance, is often at Countess B's. He says she is such a dear, such a literary lady, which is, of course, what attracts Ratazaev !

But enough of this nonsense ; I only write like this to make you laugh. Forgive me, cousin mine, for scribbling so long a letter to you to-day. I am in such a cheerful frame of mind. We all dined together at Ratazaev's and the wine was passed round so fast that—but why should I tell you such things. I will get you a book without fail. Just now I have one here of Paul de Kock's, but Paul de Kock is not fit for you, dear. They say that he has roused the righteous indignation of all the Petersburg writers. I send you a pound of sweets which I bought expressly for you. Eat them, and may each one remind you of me. But do not bite the hard-bake, or you will spoil

those little white teeth. If you want some candied peel, write and tell me. Good-bye, good-bye. God bless you, my darling.—I remain, your sincere friend,

MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH

SIXTEENTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 27

MY DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Fédora says that she knows some people who, if I wished it, would be pleased to take a kind interest in me and procure me a good situation as governess. What do you say, my friend? Shall I go or not? Then I should no longer be a burden to you and, moreover, they promise me a good salary: on the other hand, I shall hate going among strangers. I believe these are landed proprietors of some kind and they have been asking and making all sorts of inquiries about me. Shall I accept their offer? I am unsociable and shy of strangers: I like to stay a long time in one place. One is always best at home; even if one be beset with difficulties there, still it is best. Why should I go away? God knows what will be expected of me, perhaps only the nursing of a couple of children. And then people are so odd; they change their governess every two years. I entreat you, Mákar Alexeievitch, give me your advice. Shall I go or shall I not go? Why

do you so rarely come and see me? I hardly ever get so much as a glimpse of you. You are as unsociable as I. In this at least you are like me, and, indeed, are you not my kinsman? Have you no affection for me, Mákar Alexeievitch? I am so terribly lonely at times. I sit alone in the dark when Fédora is out and I think and think—I recall my whole past, my happy days and my miserable ones all pass before my eyes, flashing out of a cloud as it were. Well-known faces appear to me, oftenest of all my mother's. And what dreams I have too! I feel as though my health were restored and then I wake, as for instance this morning, and find I am still ever so weak and have a bad cough as well. I am sure I shall die before very long and then who will follow me to the grave? who will buy me a place of burial? Who will mourn my loss? And now, it may be, I shall die in a strange place, in a strange house, among strangers. My God! how sad is this life of ours, Mákar Alexeievitch! Why do you send me so many *bonbons*, my friend? How is it you have so much money? I implore you to spend no more on me but rather to save it. Fédora has sold a rug I made for fifty paper roubles. That is a good price. I did not expect it to bring as much. I shall give three silver roubles to Fédora, and with the rest I shall buy myself a dress, very simple but very warm. I am making a waistcoat for you and have chosen a very nice material for it.

Fédora has got me a book, *Tales of Bielkin*, which, if you like, I will lend to you: but please be careful not to let it get soiled and do not forget to return it as it is not mine: it is by Puschkin. Two years ago, my mother and I read these stories together and now it makes me so sad to read them again. If you have anything in the way of books, please send them to me, but not if you have to borrow from Ratazaev. Surely he must give his books away if, indeed, any have ever been printed. How can you admire his works, Mákar Alexeievitch? They are such utter rubbish. Well, good-bye. How my pen runs on! When I am sad, I enjoy chattering, no matter of what. When one has talked things over, one's heart feels lighter. Good-bye, good-bye, my friend.—Your, V. D.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

June 28

MY DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—You really distress me! Are you not ashamed of imagining such things, Varvara mine? You are really not ill, not at all ill: your cheeks glow with health. You are a little pale by nature, but still your cheeks glow. And what is all this about your dreams? You should be ashamed of such fancies, Varvara! What does

it matter about your dreams! How is it I grow fat? It is by not worrying myself. Look at me and learn, my darling. I live to myself, allow myself to grow fat, and look so well and so young that it is a pleasure to see me. For shame, dear, a truce to such fancies! You must really not give way like this. I know you so well, my darling! Once you take an idea into that little head of yours, you dream about it and worry yourself to death over it. Do not do so for my sake. Then you ask me whether or no you shall go to those people? Never! No! no! no! What can have induced you so much as to think of such a thing? And away from here too! I will not allow it, I will do all in my power to turn you from such an intention. Sooner than that you should want, I would sell my old coat and go about in shirt sleeves. No, Varinka, no, it is pure folly to think of it! And for all this Féedora is alone to blame, she is evidently a stupid woman or she would never have even suggested such a thing to you. Pray do not be led by her! You do not know all about her as I do. She is an ignorant, cross-grained, quarrelsome woman and was a great trial to her late husband. Has she offended you, my darling, in any way? Never mind! If you did as she suggests, what would become of me, what should I do? Pray put it all out of your mind. Do you want for anything now? Are you not my delight, have you no affection for me? So why not live on as you do now? you are free to

sew or to read, nor is there any need for you to sew ; so long as you do not leave us, do as you please. But, think a moment, how different it would be in a situation? Here I can get you books to read, and sometimes we can go out for walks together. Surely you are convinced that that plan of yours was sheer folly and you will think no more about it. I am coming to see you soon, very soon, but, on this matter, you now know my honest opinion. Is it not a wise one, my darling? Of course I am a man of no learning, I know quite well how very little was spent on my education, and it is not because I think much of my opinion that I express it, but you must let me stand up for Ratazaev. He is my friend and so I stand up for him. He writes very well indeed. I cannot agree with you about this and I never shall. He writes so vividly, so briskly, his characters are so life-like. Perhaps you were not in a reading mood, or you read carelessly, Varinka, because Féдора had annoyed you or something else had gone wrong. Try and read it again carefully when you are in good spirits, when, for instance, you are eating the sweets, read then! I do not deny (far from it!) that there are greater, much greater writers even than Ratazaev, but they are good in their way, and Ratazaev in his ; they write well, and so does he. He has a way of writing peculiar to himself and it is a good way. Good-bye, my darling, I cannot write more ; I must hurry to my work. See, dear, what a beautiful evening.

Be assured that God will not forsake you, and
that I shall ever remain your sincere friend,
MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.

P. S. Thank you for the book. Let us read
Puschkin together. I will certainly come this
evening.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

June 29

MY DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—No, my friend, no, it is impossible for me to go on living like this. I have thought it over and am convinced that I shall be doing very wrong if I refuse so good a situation. At least I shall be earning my own bread; I shall exert myself, I will deserve the kindness of these strangers, if it is necessary, I will even change my own character. Of course it will be hard and painful to live among strangers, to seek favours of them; I shall have to be reserved, constrained, but God will help me. I have had to do the like before. I can remember when, as a little girl, I used to go to school. All the Sunday, which I spent at home, I would play and jump about, be scolded even sometimes by my mother—but I did not care, my heart was so light. Then the evening would draw in, and a horrid dread would overwhelm me, for at ten o'clock I had to go back to school,

and there all seemed strange, cold, severe, the governesses seemed so cross on Mondays, my heart grew heavy as lead, and I felt ready to cry; then I would retire into a corner alone and cry there, and hide my tears, and they would call me lazy: a mere nothing would make me cry, if, for instance, I could not learn my lessons. Well, I grew accustomed to it and I wept at leaving school when I bid farewell to my companions. It is not right of me to live upon your charity, that thought torments me. I tell you all this, for I am accustomed to be frank with you. Do you think that I do not notice how Féдора gets up ever so early every morning and bustles about over her duties, and works until late at night? And yet old bones love rest. Do you think I do not see how you pinch yourself and spend your last kopeck on me. You can ill afford to do this, my friend. You even write and say you are ready to sell all, rather than that I should want. I believe you, too, dear friend, for I know your kind heart, but now you say you are better off than you expected to be, you have received some compensation; but later? You know perfectly well that I am always more or less unwell; I cannot work as regularly as you can, and, however willing my spirit may be, I cannot always get work. What shall I do then? Knock myself up with worry and watch you two at work? Of what possible use can I be to you? How can I be indispensable to you, my friend? What good have I ever

done you? I am merely sincerely attached to you, I love you with my whole heart but—unhappy fate!—though I know how to love and do love, I can never do you any favour or make any return for your kindness. Do not try to detain me, think things over and once more tell me your opinion. Hoping to see you,
your loving, V. D.

NINETEENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

July 1

FOLLY, sheer folly, Varinka! I shall not leave you alone until I have driven this idea out of your little head. I am quite sure now about your plan being unwise. What is it that you lack, my dearest, so long as you stay with us? You have only to say. We love you, you love us and we are all contented and happy—what more do you want? And what will you do among strangers? You do not know yet what they are like. Wait a little and I will tell you. I know them, dear: I know them well; I have had to eat their bread before now. They are spiteful as spiteful can be, far more spiteful than your heart can conceive. How will you bear being tormented with reproaches, unkind words, unkind looks? With us you are warm and comfortable, you are in a little nest as it were. And you will leave us forlorn? What shall we

do without you? What shall I do? You say you are not necessary to us? Of no use to us? You cannot judge of your own usefulness, my darling. You are everything to me, Varinka. You have such a good influence. The thought of you cheers me through the day. I write letters to you and tell you all my thoughts and how I look forward to your answers! I have bought you a wardrobe and a bonnet, and I will do any other commissions.

How can you say you are of no use to me? What shall I do alone in my old age? What pleasure shall I have in life? Perhaps you have not given a thought to this, Varinka? Think of it now and ask yourself: 'What pleasure has Mákar in life beside me?' I am so happy with you, cousin mine. And what would be the end of it all? Would you have me cast myself into the Neva? It is just this, Varinka: I cannot do without you. Ah! my darling, you would like to see me laid in my coffin and driven off to the cemetery at Volkovo with no one save some old beggar woman to escort me to the grave, where, having shovelled a little earth over me, they would leave me alone. It is unkind, wrong of you, my darling. It is indeed. I send you your book, little friend, and, if you ask me, Varinka, for my opinion of the books you lent me, then let me say that never did I read any I liked so well. I ask myself now, how it was that, for so long a time, I lived like a boor without books? How was it? I was no savage. I know scarcely anything, my

darling. I have told you plainly that I am a man of no education ; hitherto I have read very little, scarcely anything at all : I know *The Portrait of Man*, it is a clever book : *The Boy Bell-ringer and Ivikovi the Crane*, those are the only books I ever read till now. But now I have read *The Station Master*, one of the stories in the book you lent me, and I must tell you, my dearest, that, as I read, I feel as though I lived the story, and quite forget that I have a book in my hand, and that all this life which I think of as mine is but told in its pages. Moreover it was quite new to me to find that, in reading a book like this, one recollects and conjectures and considers just as though one were living through the events described. And I like, too, the simplicity of your book, for I have met with some which I should never feel I understood although I read them over and over again, yet I read this one as easily as if I had written it myself ; it is just as though my own heart were turned inside out and accurately described. It seems a simple thing enough to do ; why did I not write about it ? For indeed I feel exactly as described in the book, and I have been in similar circumstances with this Samson Virin, poor soul ! And how many Samson Virins there are round us, how many poor sufferers ! And how easy it were to describe them ! I nearly cried, Varinka, when I read how the poor fellow got drunk, and lost his senses and lay all day under his sheep-skin cloak, trying to drown his grief with

punch and then wept, rose and dried his eyes on his shabby sleeve as he thought of his lost lamb, his daughter, Dunasha! Oh! how true to nature it is! Read it and see for yourself if it be not drawn from life. I seem to see it all; and indeed I need only look around me; there is Theresa, why go any further? There is our poor clerk, is he not a kind of Samson Virin under another name, Gorschkov? The whole story is so every-day, it might happen to you or me. And even a count, whether he lived on the Neva or on the quay, could be just the same, only he would look otherwise, for in society they all have a special air of their own; still it might all happen as easily to him as to me. You know that this is so, and yet you would leave us, Varinka. Temptation may attack me at any moment. You will ruin both yourself and me, cousin mine. O my darling, retract, I implore you, put those naughty ideas out of your head, and do not grieve me for nothing. Where, my little bird, my tender little bird that can hardly fly yet, will you get food, how avoid disaster, how defend yourself against wicked persons? Enough of this, Varinka; do not listen any more to foolish advice, but read your book again carefully and attentively: it will be of use to you.

I told Ratazaev about *The Station Master*, and he says it is quite old fashioned, and that now the demand is all for books with pictures and descriptions: I did not quite understand

what he meant by that. But he admitted that Puschkin was a great writer and had been a credit to Holy Russia and much else beside. Yes, Varinka, he is a great, a very great writer, and I advise you to read the book once more and attentively, to follow my counsel and make an old man happy by your obedience. God will reward you for it without fail!—Your sincere friend,
MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

TWENTIETH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR.

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH, — Fédora brought me the fifteen silver roubles to-day! How pleased the poor old soul was when I gave her three of them! I write in haste, for I am busy cutting out your waistcoat; it is such a nice material—buff with flowers sprinkled on it. I send you a book of short stories; read one called the *The Cloak*.¹ You invite me to accompany you to a theatre? Will it not be a very expensive treat? Let us go to the gallery at any rate. It is so long since I was at the play that I cannot remember when I was there last. I am afraid it will cost too much money. Fédora only shakes her head. She says you are beginning to live quite beyond your means; and I am afraid that it is so; how much you must spend on

¹ By Gogol.

me alone! Look to it, my friend, that you do not bring misery on yourself. Fédora has just been telling me about some report of a quarrel you have had with your landlady on account of your rent. I am very much afraid you are running into debt. Well good-bye. I must be quick. I have a little to do to my bonnet, only to alter the strings.

P.S. Do you know that, if we go to the play, I will wear my new bonnet and my black mantilla over my shoulders. Will not that look nice?

TWENTY-FIRST LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

July 7

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I must tell you this *à propos* of last night. I, too, was foolish, very foolish once. I was in love with that very actress, over head and ears in love, but, if this were all, there would be nothing worth the telling; the odd thing is that I scarcely ever saw her, went to the theatre but once, and fell in love with her there and then. At that time, there lived next door to me some five very excitable young men, with whom I associated against my will, always however keeping carefully within bounds. But, in order not to be altogether left out in the cold, I generally fell in with their plans.

They spoke to me of a certain actress! Every evening that there was a performance, the whole company, who often had not a kopeck among them for the necessaries of life, would go to the gallery of the theatre, and clap, and applaud, and call that actress over and over again. They were quite mad about her. Nor could they sleep afterwards; all through the night they would talk about her, each one calling her his Glasha, each one equally in love. They excited poor, defenceless me too, for I was not more than a boy. So one night it came to pass that I accompanied them to the theatre, to the fourth tier of the gallery. I could only see the edge of the curtain, but I heard every word. The actress had a charming voice—clear, sweet, bird-like! We all clapped and shouted so loud that we were nearly being turned out, and one of us was actually expelled. I went home like one on fire! I had but one silver rouble in my pocket and my salary was not due for ten days. What do you think I did? The next morning, before going to the office, I betook myself to a French perfumer's and spent my last kopeck on scent and scented soap, and then, hardly knowing what I did, instead of returning home to dinner, spent the time in pacing up and down in front of her window. She lived on the fourth floor of a house by the Neva. When I went home, I stayed to take a little rest and again set off to the banks of the Neva in order to go past her windows once more. I dangled after her like

this for some six weeks. Sometimes I went so far as to hire a smart cab and make a point of alighting from it opposite her windows. I ran into debt, and owed money on all sides and then, all of a sudden, I ceased to care for her and got bored with it all! So you see what a dance an actress may lead even a respectable man, my darling! Of course I was very young at the time, very young indeed!

M. D.

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

July 8

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I hasten to return the book¹ you lent me on the sixth of this month and also to explain myself to you. It is unkind of you, my darling, to oblige me to do so. Every man has his share of wealth apportioned to him by the Almighty. To this one's share fall a general's epaulettes, to that one, the title of councillor; it is the part of one man to command, of another to obey implicitly though in fear and trembling. This is all arranged in accordance with a man's capacity; one is fit for one thing, and another for another, and it is God Himself who endows them differently. I have now been thirty years in the service; I have done my duty blamelessly, have

¹ *The Cloak*, by Gogol.

lived soberly and have never been convicted of disorderly conduct. I am conscious as a citizen of certain faults of mine, but also of certain good qualities. I respect my superior, and his Excellency is satisfied with me; and I know this although hitherto he has never shown me signs of special favour. My handwriting is legible and pleasant to the eye, neither too large nor too cramped and, though I sometimes grow a little confused over italics, still, on the whole, there is little fault to find: indeed, in our department, there is but one man, Ivan Prokofievitch, who writes as well. My hair has grown grey, that is my chief fault. We all have our faults; even you have some, my darling! But I have never been guilty of any grave offence, such as the breaking of a regulation or disturbing of the public peace; I have even been given a good-service order, but why do I write all this? Surely you know it all quite well without my telling. I really did not expect this of you, Varinka, I should never have thought it of you. What? So one may not live peacefully in one's own little corner—of whatever kind it be—one may not lead an innocent, harmless existence, interfering with no man, fearing God and keeping to one's-self, without fear of being watched, of some one's stealing into one's den to look round—to see, for instance, how one lives at home, whether one's waistcoat be in good condition and what one has in the way of breeches; if one has boots, how the soles are nailed, what one eats, what one drinks, what one is engaged in copying?

Pray, cousin mine, what business is it of any man's if I choose to save my shoe-leather by walking on tip-toe over rough pavement? Why notice of another man that he does not drink tea? Is one bound to drink it as a duty? Do you think that I peep into people's mouths to see if there be a morsel of food there? Have I ever so treated any one? Oh! my dearest, why should one offend those who have done one no injury? I have done my duty, zealously, heartily, and his Excellency himself respects me (though it may seem strange, he does respect me) and lo! under my very nose, and though he can owe me no grudge, some one has written a humorous account of me?¹ Of course one sometimes cobbles together some new article of clothing; one makes merry over it, by which I do not mean that one gets drunk; but it is a pleasure, for instance, to put on a pair of nice new boots, this is quite true, I have felt quite pleased myself at the sight of my foot in a slim, smart boot,—this is very true to life; but still I wonder very much that Fédor Fédorovitch allowed such a book as this to pass unnoticed without saying a word in his own defence. It is true he is but a young official and likes to scold sometimes. But why should he not? Why not scold, if scold one should? And, if one must scold for the sake of one's position, and one certainly must, one must practise; one must administer reproof—this *entre nous*, Varinka,

¹ All this refers to incidents in Gogol's story.

—because no one will do anything unless he is reprovéd and so prevented from setting up for being so-and-so or so-and-so, when business would all go crooked and sideways. And as there are different ranks, and each rank has a right to the particular kind of scolding proper to it, so, in the order of things, there can never be one kind of scolding which shall be common to all. For society itself can only exist while one rank gives itself airs with the other, because the members of each one have a right of scolding those of the one below. Without some such arrangement there could be no social order. I cannot understand how Fédor Fédorovitch could have allowed such an error to pass without comment.

And why write such a book? What is it good for? Will any one of the readers do me a kind turn for the cloak's sake? Will they even do so much as buy me new boots? No, Varinka, they will read it through carelessly, and merely ask for it 'to be continued.' I conceal myself as best I can, I am afraid of putting so much as my nose out of doors for fear of prying criticism, for they will piece together a description out of my most trifling peculiarities and every detail of my private life will be printed, read, laughed at, criticised. Why, I hardly dare show myself in the streets! Everything is so accurately described that one's very gait is recognisable. Towards the end of the story, the writer grew a little kinder, more sympathetic. He put in, for instance, perhaps

when his notes ran short: that the man was upright, a good citizen, not one to take unfair advantage in his dealings with his companions, attentive to the commands of his superiors (here an example might surely be inserted!), bore no ill will to any man, had faith in God and died, (since die he must), lamented. But it were best of all not to have him die, poor soul, but to let them find his cloak and that Fédor Fédorovitch (I write just as though it were all about me), hearing further particulars of his merits, should promote him in his office, raise him to a higher grade, and give him a substantial increase of salary. Thus wickedness would be punished, the good man would triumph, and his companions would be no better off than before. That is what I should have done, for, as it stands, there is not much to learn from the story. It is merely a trivial tale of every day rascality. Why did you send me such a book, cousin mine? It is a mischievous one, Varinka, and the story is most improbable; there never can have been any such clerk. I shall complain about it, Varinka, I shall most certainly complain.—Your humble servant,
 MAKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR*July 27*

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—The events of the last few days and your letters had startled and dismayed me, and left me in the gravest perplexity, but Fédora has explained everything to me. Oh, why have you let despair bring you suddenly so low, Mákar Alexeievitch?

I am not satisfied with your explanations. Do you not see now how right I was, when I resolved to accept the good situation offered to me? Moreover my last adventure has frightened me not a little. You say that it was your love for me that constrained you to keep the truth from me. When you assured me that you only spent spare money on me, which would otherwise lie idle in the bank, even then I felt deeply indebted to you. But now I hear there was never any such money, that, happening to hear of my destitute position, out of pity for me, you resolved to spend your salary, which you drew in advance, and even sold your clothes when I was ill. I am therefore in such distress that I do not know what to do. O Mákar Alexeievitch! you should have stayed your hand after the first kindnesses you did me when you were stirred by pity and cousinly love, and not have thrown away your money on what was not necessary. You have

forfeited my affection, Mákar Alexeievitch, for you have not been open with me and now when I think how you squandered your last kopecks on finery, sweets, excursions, plays, and books, I feel I am paying dearly for them in remorse for my unpardonable thoughtlessness (for I accepted everything without considering you), and the recollection of these treats, by which you thought to procure me pleasure, is turned to grief and nothing remains except unprofitable regrets. I had noticed in what low spirits you were lately, and was prepared for something unpleasant, but no suspicion of the real state of things ever crossed my mind. And have you indeed fallen so low as this, Mákar Alexeievitch? What is it every one says of you now? They say that you, whom hitherto every one has respected for uprightness, decency, and sobriety, that you have now given way to a most disgusting vice to which you never seemed so much as prone before. What were my feelings when Fédora told me that you had been picked up drunk in the street and had been brought home by the police? I was filled with horror, although I expected that something unusual had occurred from our having seen nothing of you for four days. But have you considered, Mákar Alexeievitch, what the authorities will say when they learn the real reason of your absence? You say they all laugh at you, that they all know of our friendship, that your fellow clerks refer to me in joke. Never mind that, Mákar Alexeievitch, and be calm. There is a story about you and

some officers which alarms me though I have heard but a vague account of it. Will you tell me all about it? You admit that you feared to be frank with me, that you were afraid lest the revelation should cost you my friendship, that you were in despair at not knowing how to help me when I was ill, that you sold everything in order that I might not have to go to the hospital, that you ran as far as possible into debt and exchanged angry words with your landlady every day—but you only made things worse by not telling me all. Now you see I know the truth. You were determined to hinder me from realising that it was I who brought you into this unhappy position, but you have made me doubly unhappy by concealing the truth. All this has quite stunned me, Mákar Alexeievitch! Oh! my friend, misfortune is an infectious disease. The unfortunate should keep away from his fellows for fear of infecting them. I have been a cause of greater misery than you ever experienced before in your simple, lonely life. This is what I feel most deeply.

Write to me and tell me honestly how it came to pass that you fell so low. Reassure me if possible. It is no egotism that moves me to write about my anxiety but rather such friendship and love for you as can never pass away. Good-bye. I await your answer with impatience. You thought unkindly of me.—Your affectionate,
VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA

TWENTY-FOURTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA*July 28*

MY DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA—Now that all is over and that everything will gradually fall into its place again, I write to you, my darling: you are worrying yourself about what the authorities will think of me and so I hasten to assure you that my self-respect is very precious to me. To you I confess my misfortunes and misdeeds, but the authorities know nothing of either, nor will know, and so they treat me with as much deference as ever. My only fear is lest gossiping tongues should inform against me. Here in the house, no one reviles me except the landlady, and even she only grumbles now that, helped by your ten roubles, I have paid her a part of what I owe! As to the rest, they do not care so long as one does not ask them to lend money. Let me say in conclusion that I reckon your regard for me of greater value than all else in the world and the thought of it soothes me even under present difficulties. Thank God that the first shock, the darkest trouble is past, and that you do not hold me to have been a false friend or a selfish one because I kept you to myself and deceived you, because I had not the strength to let you go, but clung to you as to my good angel. I will work hard now and pay off my debts. Eustace Ivanovitch

spoke of them to me as I went by their house yesterday. I will not deny that my debts are an anxiety to me and so is the poor state of my wardrobe, but neither really matters, so pray do not worry yourself, my dearest. You send me half a rouble, Varinka, and it cuts me to the heart. So it has come to this! It is not I, poor old fool, who help you, but you, my little orphan cousin, who help me. Féдора did right to get some money. Just now I have no hope of receiving any, if any chance of it should come my way, I will let you know at once. Oh! how I fear those gossiping tongues! Good-bye, darling, I kiss your hand and entreat you to try to get strong. I cannot write more because I must hurry to the office and try, by greater industry and zeal, to atone for past neglect of my duties; I will postpone telling you of my adventure with the officers until to-night.—Your sincere friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

TWENTY-FIFTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARINKA

July 28

DARLING VARINKA,—O! Varinka! Varinka! Now it is you who are in the wrong. It is your conscience that must bear the weight. I am completely baffled by your little letter, I am

perplexed and yet, now when I have leisure to think things over, I am convinced that I was in the right all the time. I do not speak of my drunkenness, dear, but of my great love for you. You do not know all, my darling! If you did, if you knew how precious you were to me, you would not speak thus. You argue it all out so rationally, but I am sure your heart knows better.

Little friend, I cannot distinctly recall my adventure with the officers. I must tell you though, that I was in a state of much mental agitation just then. For a whole month I had, as it were, been clutching at straws, for my position was desperate. I hid myself from you and from my fellow-lodgers, but the landlady was always abusing me. Even that I could bear. To be reviled by a worthless old woman was merely a disgrace, but when, God knows how, she learned about you, and shouted it all over the house, I was stunned, as it were, by horror and stopped my ears. Unfortunately the other lodgers did not stop their ears, but pricked them, and I did not know where to hide my head.

It was this accumulation of misery which worked my ruin. Suddenly, too, I heard terrible tales from *Fédora*, of some worthless adventurer who appeared in your house and insulted you with shameful proposals. How deeply he had wounded you! I could imagine how deeply from having experienced insult myself. Then I seemed to lose all self-

control and to sink lower and lower. My frenzy was such that I wished to seek your tempter out at once. Indeed, I hardly knew what I wanted, except to defend you from insult; Oh! what a miserable time I spent! I remember that the rain, the mud, aggravated my distress! I was returning home, sinking from fatigue, when I fell in with Emilius Ilietch, who is a clerk, or rather was a clerk, but has been turned away. I do not know now what he was about, he seemed loitering just as I was. Then, . . . but this is not fit for you, Varinka, you cannot like to read of your friend's misfortunes, of his misery, his degradation! On the evening of the third day, at Emilius's instigation, I went with him to a certain officer's. I had asked our porter for his address. To tell the truth, I had had my eye on the young man for some time. I had watched him when he lodged in our house. Now I see that I acted unwisely, for I was not quite sober when I called on him. I really cannot remember anything except that there were a great many other officers with him, or so it seemed to me. God only knows! Neither do I remember what I said in my righteous indignation. Well! they turned me out, threw me down the stairs, or, if they did not throw me, they certainly pushed me. You know in what condition I returned home, Varinka. Of course I lowered myself, and sank in my own estimation, but indeed no one knows of it except those who were present and you; so it is all as though it had never been. What

do you think about it, Varinka? I know this for certain, that last year Accentius Ocepovitch took a like liberty with Peter Petrovitch, but he did it secretly. He called him into the guard-room, I saw it all through a crack in the door. He was obliged to arrange matters as a gentleman should ; no one saw it but me, and I am no one, or at any rate do not count as anybody. Well, afterwards Peter Petrovitch and Accentius Ocepovitch were on quite good terms. Peter Petrovitch never told any one, and now they both bow and shake hands. I do not deny, I dare not deny to you, Varinka that I fell very low, and, worst of all, lost faith in myself, but surely fate had decreed that I should, and one cannot avoid destiny as you know. Well, that is a full account of my misery and madness, Varinka, there it is even if you do not care to read it. I am not well, my darling, and am in no mood for mirth. So now assuring you of my affection, I remain, your respectful servant,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

TWENTY-SIXTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

July 29

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—I have read your two letters and oh! how sad they have made me! Listen to me, my friend, either you are

keeping something back from me and telling me but a part of your misfortunes or . . . in fact, Mákar Alexeievitch, a certain confusion is discernible in your letter. Come and see me, for God's sake, come and see me to-day, come and have dinner with us. I do not know how you live now, or how you have arranged with your landlady. You never speak of this in your letters, you seem to keep it back on purpose. So, good-bye, my friend, come to-day without fail ; how much better it would be if you always dined with us. Fédora cooks very well. Good-bye,—Your,

VARVARA DOBROSELOVA.

TWENTY-SEVENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

August 1

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—Happy are you, my darling, to whom God has granted to requite kindness by kindness ! I know the tenderness of your little heart, nor do I reproach you, only do not find fault with me because, old as I am, I ran into debt. Do not blame me. How could I have acted differently ? These reproaches hurt me so when they come from you, little friend. Do not be angry with me either for saying this ; my heart is so sore. Poor people are touchy, nature has ordained it. The poor man expects so much ; he looks quite

differently on God's light to what other men do, he steals side glances at his fellow-men, he looks timidly round and listens to every word,—as though, forsooth, they were all spoken at him. Surely they are remarking on his unsightly appearance. They are wondering whether he minds being noticed. They are looking at him from this side and that side. It is apparent to every one, Varinka, that the poor man is of less importance than his own rags, and that no one thinks him worthy of any attention, and so it has always been and will be. Because in the poor man everything seems so ridiculous that his ambition should be to be unremarkable—a noble ambition. Ha! ha! ha! Von Emela said the other day that in some place or other they got up a subscription for him, and he told us how, for every small sum subscribed, he was subjected to some sort of official inquiry. The subscribers thought they gave out of charity, but in reality they subscribed for the sight of a poor man at close quarters.

Nowadays favours are curiously bestowed, but perhaps it was always so, who knows? Either they do not know how to confer them or they are masters of the craft, one of the two. Perhaps hitherto you have not been aware of this, well, you know now! How does the poor man learn all this? Why, by experience! He knows, for instance, that such and such a gentleman, who knows him by sight, thinks to himself when he goes to a restaurant, 'I wonder what that poor

devil of a clerk has got to eat to-day? I am going to have my meat *sautée en papillotes*, while he, most likely, dines off water gruel.' Now what is it to him if I do dine off water gruel? There are many gentlemen like this in the world, Varinka, who are always thinking of such things. They go spying about in their satirical, inquisitive way and watch whether the sole of one's boot is quite worn out or only the toe of it. They notice how that clerk of this department has all his toes out of his boots, so that his nails are all broken, and they write about it and it actually appears in print . . . What is it even to you, Varinka, if my boots are worn out? If you will forgive the figure of speech, I will tell you that a poor man has a maidenly shame about things such as these. Just as you—forgive me—would not undress before any one, so the poor man cannot bear to have people pry into his wretched dwelling to see, forsooth, what his domestic arrangements may be like. So why insult me as my enemies do, and wound the self-respect of an honest man?

For to-day, in the presence of my superiors, I sat like a cub or a plucked sparrow, burning with an inward shame. I was terribly ashamed, Varinka! and it was natural enough with my coat out at elbows and my buttons dangling by a thread. It seemed as though my clothes had become even more untidy than usual on purpose! My spirits sank. Even Stephen Carlovitch himself to-day spoke to me at first on

matters of business, and then exclaimed, as it were involuntarily, 'But, my dear Mákar Alexeievitch!' and then stopped and said no more. But I knew what he meant to say, and felt the blush spread even over my bald head. Of course it does not really matter, but it makes me anxious, for it may arouse suspicion. Have they made any inquiries? God forbid! I must admit that I mistrust one man. He is of the evil sort who do anything for gain; who will betray one; who endeavour to account for every hour of one's life; from whom nothing is sacred.

I know now who is at the bottom of it; it is Ratazaev. He is acquainted with some one in our department and, in the course of conversation, will have narrated all with additions; or it may be that he related it in his own department, and so it got round to ours. In this house every one knows everything to the minutest particular, and they point at you from their windows; this I know for certain. For, when last night I was going over to dine with you, they all leaned out of their windows and the landlady said, 'There goes the old rascal who is the lover of the young girl opposite,' and she said other dreadful things of you. But all this is nothing compared with the vile plan of Ratazaev's of putting us both into one of his books; he has announced it himself and some kind people who lodge here repeated it to me. I cannot bear so much as to think of it, and yet I do not know how to prevent it. I

H

fear we have offended God in some way, my darling. You offer to lend me a book to distract my thoughts. What good can a book do me? What is it? The characters are merely fictitious ones. Novels are mere rubbish, written to no purpose but for idle people to read : believe me, my darling, I have many years' experience. And even if they tell you that Shakespeare himself is worth anything, because, forsooth, his works are literature, do not believe them ; he too is good for nothing and his works are merely written to be read as a pastime.—Your,

MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.

TWENTY-EIGHTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

August 2

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Do not distress yourself so ; please God, all may yet go well. Fédora has got quite a heap of work for herself and me, and we are setting most cheerfully to work, hoping we may get through it all to-day. She suspects that all the unpleasant things that have befallen me lately are Anna Fédorovna's doing ; I do not really care whether or no. I feel in excellent spirits to-day. You want to borrow money ; pray do no such thing ; you will not be able to avert ruin when the time comes for repaying. It

will be much better for you to live on here a little longer, come often to us, and pay no heed to your landlady. As to your other enemies, I am sure you worry yourself with groundless suspicions, Mákar Alexeievitch! I told you last time I saw you, that I thought you wrote very unequally. Good-bye! I expect you without fail. Yours, V. D.

TWENTY-NINTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

August 3

MY ANGEL, VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I lose no time in letting you know, my darling, that my hopes are a little revived. But, O cousin mine, you forbid me to borrow money! I must, dearest, I positively must; it is absolutely necessary! It would be a pity for me and for you to throw away this chance. You are still anything but strong, cousin mine, so I write to tell you that I must borrow. Will you let me give you an account of the whole matter?

I must tell you, my darling, that, in the office, I sit next to Emilian Ivanovitch. This is not the civilian of whom you know. This one is like myself, a titular councillor, and we two are the oldest government officials in the department. He is a good soul, a disinterested soul, but very reticent and as rough as a bear to look at. He is very hard-working, moreover,

and writes a good English hand, and to tell the truth writes as well as I—a most deserving man. We have never become intimate, and, as a rule, merely wish one another ‘good day’ and ‘good evening’: sometimes when in need of a penknife, I have said to him, ‘Will you lend me a penknife, Emilian Ivanovitch, if you please?’ but I only addressed him when occasion demanded. To-day, however, he said to me, ‘Mákar Alexeievitch, why do you look so anxious?’ and I saw that he meant it kindly and was frank with him. Of course I did not tell him all, there is much I have not the heart to tell, but I said I was in stress for money, and so on. Emilian Petrovitch said at once, ‘You must borrow, my friend; borrow of Peter Petrovitch, who lends out at interest, I borrowed of him once, and paid him a reasonable rate of interest, he is not grasping.’ Varinka, my heart leapt for joy. I thought to myself that perhaps God would put kindness into the heart of Peter Petrovitch so that he might lend me money. Then I should be able to pay my landlady, and help you, and brush myself up, for my clothes are disgracefully shabby. I am ashamed as I sit in my place, and besides, my fellow clerks sneer and mock at me; and sometimes his Excellency passes by our table, and glances at me and notices my disreputable attire! And he is so particular about these two things: cleanliness, and tidiness. He does not say anything, but I am ready to die of shame. It ended by my bracing myself so far

as to put my pride in my ragged pocket, and making my way to Peter Petrovitch, full of hope, but at the same time more dead than alive with uncertainty. It all came to nothing, Varinka! Peter Petrovitch was busy talking to Theodore Ivanovitch. I went up to him and pulled him by the sleeve. 'Peter Petrovitch,' I said, 'Peter Petrovitch!' He looked round, and I at once besought him to lend me thirty roubles. At first he did not understand, and then when I explained, he laughed at me and made no answer. So I again besought him for the money. Then he asked what security I could give him, had I anything to pawn? Whereupon he bent over his writing once more. I waited a moment and then spoke, 'No, Peter Petrovitch, I have nothing to pawn,' and I went on to explain that I would repay him without fail as soon as I received my salary. Then someone summoned him, and I lingered until he came back, but he merely cut his pen and seemed not to notice me. So I spoke again, 'Will you not lend me something, Peter Petrovitch?' Still he kept silence, and apparently never even heard me. I went on and on, and finally, as a last resource, once more plucked him by the sleeve. He muttered something, mended his pen, and went on writing; so I took my leave. They may be good people, my darling, but they are proud, very proud,—well what is that to me? They are of no use to us, Varinka. So now I have told you all about it. Emilian Ivanovitch smiled when I told him,

shook his head and cordially bid me be not be discouraged. He is a nice kind man. He offered to recommend me to a money-lender, who lives in Viborsko, Varinka, Emilian says he is quite sure to advance me money. So I shall go there to-morrow. What say you? You see I must borrow. My landlady threatens to turn me out, and refuses to give me any dinner. My boots are in a dreadful state, and I have lost nearly all my buttons. And what if one of the authorities were to notice my disgraceful clothes? You see I must, Varinka, I really must!

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

THIRTIETH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

August 4

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Pray go and borrow a little money as quickly as possible. Nothing shall persuade me to beg your assistance under present circumstances, but if you only knew how I am situated! It is impossible for us to remain in this lodging. A terrible thing has befallen me, and you can have no idea of my distress and agitation! Imagine, my friend, this morning a complete stranger of rather advanced age, almost an old man in fact, and decked with orders, came to our door. I was amazed and could not imagine what brought him. Fédora had gone out shopping. He asked me

many questions, how I lived and what I did, and without awaiting any answer from me, he informed me that he was the grandfather of that very officer who is your enemy and mine; that his grandson's ill conduct had annoyed him very much and been a disgrace to his family; he said his grandson was a very weather-cock, and that he was himself prepared to take me under his care: he advised me not to listen to rakish young men, and added that he sympathised with me as a father would, that he had quite a father's feelings for me and would do all he could to help me. I blushed very red and knew not what to think or whether to thank him. Then he seized my hand, patted me on the cheek, told me I was very pretty, that he liked the dimples in my cheeks. I cannot remember half he said, but at last he tried to kiss me, excusing himself by saying he was an old man. Imagine my horror, my disgust! Then Fédora appeared, and he grew rather confused and repeated how he respected me for my modesty and good conduct, and that he wished very much that I would not treat him as a stranger. Then he called Fédora aside and made some paltry excuse to give her money. Of course Fédora would accept nothing. At last he went away repeating all his protestations, and saying that he would come again and bring me some cherries (he was evidently much confused). He advised me to change my lodging and recommended me to go to a very pleasant one which he rented

and where I could live free of cost. He said he was much taken with me because I was a good well-behaved girl, advised me to keep clear of young men for the future, and finally said he was acquainted with Anna Fédorovna and that he was charged by her to say she was coming to see me. Then it was all quite clear to me. I hardly know what I did; it was the first time I had ever been in such a position; I was beside myself and I think actually made him feel ashamed. Fédora helped me, and almost drove him from the house. We are sure it is all Anna Fédorovna's doing, for how else could he have found us out?

And now I turn to you, Mákar Alexeievitch, and beg you to help me. Do not leave me here for the love of God! Borrow or get money in some way or other, for we have nothing with which to meet the expenses of leaving this lodging, and even Fédora says we must not stay. We need at least twenty-five roubles; I will return them to you; I will earn them; Fédora has procured me some more work, so, if a higher rate of interest is insisted on, never mind, but agree to it. I will repay you, but for God's sake do not refuse to help me. I am very loath to worry you now you are so poor, but your help is all I have to rely on! Good-bye, Mákar Alexeievitch, think of me and God grant you success!

V. D.

THIRTY-FIRST LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA*August 4*

MY DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—
These unexpected shocks agitate and distress me! These terrible misfortunes break my heart! Not only does a horde of danglers and wicked old men do their best to harass you, and so lay you on a bed of sickness, they wish to work my destruction too. They are wearing me out! Of course I would sooner die than not help you! It is indeed death to me to refuse you assistance, and yet if I assist you, you will fly away from me as a little nestling flies away from the owls and birds of prey who have gathered round to peck it to death. I cannot bear this either, my darling. It was cruel of you to suggest it, Varinka. How could you? They torment you, they insult you, you suffer, my little bird, and then complain of having to distress me and you promise to work hard to repay me, which, with your delicate health, means that you will kill yourself in order to repay me in a specified time. Are you thinking of what you say, Varinka? Why should you sew, worry your poor little head over needle-work, spoil your dear eyes, and ruin your health? O Varinka! Varinka! I know I am of no importance, of little use, but this time I will prove that I can be of use! I will overcome every difficulty, I will do extra work, I will

copy for authors, I will go to them myself and compel them to give me work, for you see, my darling, they are in need of good copyists, I know they are. But I will not have you wear yourself out: I will not let you keep to that pernicious resolve of yours. I will certainly borrow and die rather than fail in raising money. You write that I am not to be afraid of high interest—of course I am not afraid of it, I am afraid of nothing now. I shall demand forty paper roubles: that is not much, is it, Varinka? Do you think they will advance me forty roubles at once? That is, do you think that, at first sight, I inspire sufficient confidence? Will they judge favourably of me from my countenance? Do you remember how I impressed you? What do you suggest, Varinka? Do you know, the dread of such an interview makes me feel quite ill? But of the forty roubles I shall give you twenty-five; two to my landlady, and the remainder I shall keep for my own use. You see, darling, I must give a trifle to the landlady, it is unavoidable; and you, who know all about it, will see I cannot give her more; consequently you must not tell any one all this or even speak of it aloud to me. I can buy myself boots for one silver rouble, for I really do not know whether it will be possible for me to go to the office to-morrow in those I have now. I must have a new necktie too. I have had this one for more than a year, but, as you have promised to make me both a tie and a shirt

front out of your old apron, I will give no further thought to the necktie. So much for my boots and my tie. Now about the buttons, little friend! You will agree that I cannot dispense with them, and I have lost quite half of mine. I tremble lest his Excellency should notice my untidiness! what would he say? The very idea frightens me to death. Well? now I have but three roubles left over, I must buy food and tobacco with that, for I cannot exist without tobacco, and it is ten days now since I had my pipe between my lips. To tell you the truth, I should have bought some and not told you, but I am ashamed of doing so. So, you see, while you are in grief, I am treating myself to luxuries, and I tell it all to you in order that my conscience may not reproach me. I tell you frankly, Varinka, I am now in such abject poverty as even I have never known before. My landlady upbraids me, no one treats me with any respect, I have many privations and debts; and in the office, where I never was well treated, I cannot tell you how they treat me now. I avoid meeting any one, and I slink into the office, shrinking away from everyone. This is only to impress upon you my strength of mind. And what, if we cannot get any money? Well, it is better not even to think about that, so as not to depress one's-self beforehand. I write this to prevent your worrying yourself with this idea. My God! what will you do then? I console myself with the thought that, in that case, you would not

leave your present lodging but would stay near me—but no, I could not return home empty handed, I should go away and never be seen again. I have written so much to you and now I must go and shave. It improves one's appearance, and good looks are always successful. God help me! I am just setting out.

M. DJEVUSCHKIN.

THIRTY-SECOND LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR.

August 5

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Do not give way to despair! I have enough to bear without that. I send you thirty kopecks in silver; I cannot send more. Buy whatever you most need and let it keep you until to-morrow at any rate. We have scarcely anything left and what we shall do to-morrow I cannot tell. How sad it all is, Mákar Alexeievitch! but still do not brood over it. It will not improve matters! Fédora says there is no harm in our stopping here some time longer, that if we moved every one would guess why, and our enemies could always find us out again. Still it is not pleasant to stay on here. If it were not sad, I would tell you about something.

What a strange man you are, Mákar Alexeievitch! You take everything so much—too much—to heart; and so you can never be other

than unhappy. I have been reading over all your letters attentively and I find that in every one you seem anxious and worried about me and careless of yourself. You always say you have a kind heart, and I say you have too kind a heart. Let me give you a little piece of friendly advice, Mákar Alexeievitch! I am grateful, very grateful for all the kindness you have shown me; but imagine what it is to me to find that after all your misfortunes—of which I was the innocent cause—you still live only in my life, in my joys, my griefs! If you persist in taking what concerns another so to heart, if you sympathise so deeply with her, then indeed there is small wonder if you are unhappy. To-day I saw you set off to your office, and I was quite alarmed to see your pallid, despairing face. It was quite changed, and all because you dreaded having to tell me of your failure, fearing lest it should grieve and alarm me, but directly you saw me smile, your heart seemed relieved of its weight. Mákar Alexeievitch! I entreat of you not to fret or despair, to be more reasonable. You will see that all will yet go well and turn out for the best. It is so bad for you to go on fretting and worrying over another's misfortunes. Good-bye, my friend. Pray do not be anxious about me.

V. D.

THIRTY-THIRD LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA*August 5*

MY DARLING VÁRINKA,—Very well, little cousin, very well! So you have decided that after all I need not despair because I have not been able to get the money. I am quite satisfied, I am even happy as regards you, for now you will not go away from me to another lodging. To tell the truth, my joy overflowed when I saw how kindly you wrote of me in your little note. It is not that my pride was gratified, but rather that I see you have a real love for me since it distresses you to think of my anxiety.

You charge me not to be faint-hearted. I am quite aware that one should not be; but tell me, my dearest, what can I do about boots to go to the office in to-morrow? Such things may seem trivial, my darling, but they are a dreadful worry. It is not for my own sake, moreover, that I am so anxious; I should not care though I had to encounter the pinching cold without either cloak or boots; I could endure it, I can stand any privation; I am a simple little fellow, but what would people say? My enemies' sharp tongues would wag if I made my appearance without a cloak. It is for the sake of others that I wear a cloak, and it is the same about boots. I really need boots for the sake

of my respectability and good name: and mine are in holes. Believe me my experience is of many years standing, listen to an old man who knows the world and mankind but no untidy slovens.

But as yet I have not told you all particulars of what took place to-day. I have suffered as much misery in a single morning as another could endure in a year. This is what happened: I set out early, both in order to be sure of finding the money-lender, and in order not to be late at the office. How it poured with rain, and how muddy the streets were! I wrapped myself in my cloak and, as I hurried on, I prayed inwardly that God would grant pardon for my sins and success to my errand. As I went by the church, I crossed myself, confessed my sins and thought of how I ought to make my peace with God. So absorbed was I that I looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, but I made straight for my point. The streets were deserted: I met no one save work-people, and no wonder, for who would go out for a walk so early, or in such weather? A troop of labourers in dirty clothes jostled rudely past me. A feeling of terror overcame me and I could hardly stand, when I thought that perhaps the money would be refused. I lost the sole of my boot on the Voskrecenski Bridge, and hardly know how I managed to push on. Then I met our clerk Jermslaev, who stood and stretched himself, and followed me with his eye as if he hoped

I would stand him a drink : ' Ah, my friend ! ' I thought, ' I wish I could afford to stand you a glass ! ' I was dreadfully weary, so I stood still for a moment, but soon hurried on again. I looked about me in order, by distracting my attention, to cheer myself, to raise my spirits, but I could not control my thoughts, and I only got more and more muddy from not looking where I stepped. I was ashamed of my draggled appearance. At last I caught sight, in the distance, of a yellow wooden house with a sort of balcony on the *entresol*, and I thought it answered to the description Emilian Ivanovitch had given me of Markov's house (Markov is the money-lender). You see, although I was so distraught, I knew it to be Markov's house. Still I thought good to ask a policeman, ' Can you tell, me, please, whether Markov lives here ? ' The policeman was a surly fellow and seemed unwilling to answer, but he hissed out a ' Yes ' between his teeth. These policemen are always so rude, but what matter ! Only it made an unpleasant impression on me, as though every one were against me. I walked up and down the street, in front of the house, two or three times and my heart seemed to sink lower and lower, and I said to myself, ' He will not advance me any money, I know he will not, for he does not know me and my business with him is a ticklish one, and I look a figure—well, fate shall decide ! ' So, in order not to leave myself time to change my mind and give up the attempt, I pushed the door

open. Here another misfortune befell me: the wretched house-dog flew at me barking violently and ready to jump out of its skin with fury. Oh! what trifles suffice to drive a man mad and put him to shame and disperse all his carefully cherished resolutions. I fled through the yard more dead than alive with terror, and never looking to see whether there was any one on the dimly lit threshold, stumbled against an old woman, who was just then pouring milk out of a pail into a jug. Of course she spilled over the milk. The foolish old dame screamed and asked me roughly where I was going, what I wanted there, and went on to abuse me roundly. This is what I mean when I say such things are always happening to me; surely I was born under an unlucky star; I am always the victim of some fresh calamity. Attracted by the noise, an old hag of a landlady put out her head and I at once inquired of her whether one Markov lived there? She said 'No,' but she still lingered and looked kindly, while she inquired what I wanted with him. I explained to her and mentioned the name of Emilian Ivanovitch. Whereupon she called her daughter, a bare-footed woman of middle age, and bade her go upstairs and call for her father, 'he is with the lodgers,' she said. Then she asked me to come in and I obeyed. There was not anything particular about the room; on the walls hung pictures which seemed to be, for the most part, portraits of generals. There was a sofa, a

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round table, some pots of mignonette and some balsams. I wondered whether or no it were wiser to be off while there was yet time. I actually made up my mind to fly, my darling! 'I had better come back to-morrow,' I thought, 'the weather will have improved by then and I am wet through, to-day I have spilled the milk, and the generals, one and all, glare so fiercely at me.' . . . I had reached the door when Markov came in—looking very composed, he had grey hair, a sly expression in his small eyes, and was attired in a greasy dressing-gown, tied by a cord round his waist. He asked me a few questions, and I stammered out the name of Emilian Ivanovitch, and how I wanted forty roubles. Then I stopped, for I read on his face that all was in vain. 'No!' he said, 'I cannot help you in this matter, I have no money. What security have you to offer?' I was forced to admit that I had none, but that Emilian Ivanovitch, etc. etc. He heard me out, and then said Emilian Ivanovitch was nothing to him and that he had no money to lend me. 'Well,' I thought, 'this is what I foretold,' but I felt that it would be better if the earth would open under me and swallow me up. I grew quite cold, my limbs were numb, and I trembled from head to foot. I looked at him and he at me as if to say 'go away, there is no good to be got here for you,' so that, on any other occasion, I should have been ashamed of lingering. 'Why do you need the money?' he asked. I opened my lips to answer and once more

to plead my cause, but he would not wait, and repeated that he had no money, that if he had, he would have lent it me with pleasure. I promised him I would repay him, repay him punctually, even before the money was due, that he might demand any rate of interest he pleased, still I would repay him. My thoughts were of you, my darling, just then; I recalled your misery and necessity, and the little silver piece you sent me; but again he refused and said interest was one thing and security another, that he had no money or he would lend it me, and the rascal actually called God to witness that he was speaking the truth.

I cannot tell, cousin mine, how I got out of the house, how I crossed Vibortski and came to the Voskrecenski Bridge, tired, chilled, and so worn out that I could not go to the office before ten. I wished to brush some of the mud off my clothes, but Sneguev, the porter, said I must not, for I should soil the brush, and the brush was a gentleman in government employ. So I am treated worse than the very rags with which they rub their feet. It is nearly the death of me, Varinka! It is not the lack of money which I feel so deeply, but these petty annoyances, these whispered taunts, these smiles, these jokes. His Excellency may unexpectedly— . . . but no, my darling, my good days are over. I have been reading all your letters over to-day; it made me so sad, my dearest. Good-bye, little cousin. God bless you.

M. DJEVUSCHKIN.

P.S. I had intended to give you a half facetious account of my troubles but it was impossible to make light of them, though I wished to please you. I will certainly come to-morrow.

THIRTY-FOURTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

August 11

VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA, MY DARLING,—I am ruined, we are both of us ruined, both of us together irretrievably ruined! My good name, my self-respect, both are lost. I am undone and so are you, my darling, for ever undone. And it is I, only I, who am the cause of it all! They have driven me away, they despise and make fun of me, and my landlady does nothing but scold, she treats me worse than any dog! Last night at Ratazaev's, one of the company read aloud the rough draft of one of my letters to you, which I had let fall out of my pocket by accident. How they laughed over it, my darling! They derided us, they chuckled, the sneaks! I went to them and accused Ratazaev of perfidy and called him traitor. He answered that I was a sneak who amused himself by intrigues. He said, 'you kept it all from us, you are a very "Lovelace,"' and now they will none of them address me by any other name than 'Lovelace.'

Listen, my dearest, they know of all now, of you, cousin mine, and all that concerns you, they know of all! Who can have told them? Faldony knows it too, and is on their side; I told him to fetch me a sausage to-day, and he did not go, but said he was busy, so I told him he was bound to go, and he said, 'I am not bound, for you do not pay my mistress, so I need not obey you.' I would not stand there and be insulted by him, an ignorant peasant, so I called him a fool, and he said I was one myself. I thought he must be drunk to insult me so, and I said, 'you have been drinking.' He was ruder than ever and remarked that it was not for me to accuse another of drinking, that I had begged some one for a small coin, and he added, 'and you call yourself a gentleman!' That is how things are with me now. I am treated like a schoolboy or an outcast. I am so miserable. This means ruin, irretrievable ruin! M. D.

THIRTY-FIFTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

August 13

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Calamity follows calamity so quickly that I do not know what to do. What are you going to do now? You must not rely on me, for I burned my left hand to-day with the iron. I let it fall by

accident and both bruised and burned myself. I find it impossible to do any work, and Fédora has been ill for the last three days. I am tormented with anxiety. I send you thirty kopecks in silver; it is almost the last money we have left, still I could not but send you help in your need. I could cry with vexation. Good-bye, my friend! It would be a great comfort to me if you paid us a visit to-day.

V. D.

THIRTY-SIXTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

August 14

MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—What is the matter with you? Have you no fear of God? You will drive me out of my mind! Are you not ashamed? You fret about the loss of your reputation! You are a respectable, well-conducted, self-respecting man!—and what is it all men say of you? You really should be ready to die of shame! Have you no regard for your own grey head? Have you no fear of God? Fédora says that she will not help you again, nor must I give you any more money. What have you reduced me to, Mákar Alexeievitch? Do you think I am indifferent to your bad conduct; you can have no idea of what humiliations I have to endure on your account! It is impossible for me

to show myself on the stairs; every one points at me and says the most dreadful things; they say straight out, that I have a drunkard for a lover. It is terrible to listen to such things and not be able to defend one's-self. When you were carried home, all the people here pointed at you with contempt: 'There,' they said, 'your clerk is being brought home.' I can only be ashamed of you. I shall go away this very day, and shall seek a place as a servant or in some laundry, for I cannot stay here. I wrote to you asking you to come here and you never came. Evidently my tears and entreaties count for nothing, Mákar Alexeievitch! And what have you done with the money? Pray take care! You will certainly be your own ruin! Oh, the shame and the ignominy of it! Your landlady would not open the door last night, and you slept in a shed; I know all about it. Oh! could you know what I suffered when I heard of it! Come to us, you will be happy with us, and we will read together, and talk over old times. Féдора will tell us about her going on pilgrimage. For my sake, dear, do not be the ruin of yourself and me. I have nothing to live for but you, and I will be true to you. Be upright and firm, remembering that poverty is no crime. What is there to despair about, our misfortunes are but temporary? God grant that all may come right if only you will not give way. I send you a twenty kopeck piece; buy some tobacco with it or anything else you like, only do not mis-spend it! Come

and see us without fail. Perhaps you felt ashamed of coming before, but it is a false shame. I know you have repented sincerely ere this. Trust in God. He will make everything come right.

V. D.

THIRTY-SEVENTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA

August 19

DARLING VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA.—I am indeed ashamed, terribly ashamed. But yet why should one not be cheerful for once in a way? While I was drunk, I did not worry any more about the soles of my boots, after all a boot sole is not worthy of any attention, it can never be anything else than a nasty, muddy thing. And boots too, what are they? The Greek philosophers wore none, so why should they be thought so indispensable now-a-days? At any rate I think there is no need to insult and despise me on account of mine. Oh! my darling, my darling, what a lecture you have written me! Tell Fédora that she is an absurd, fussy, insolent old woman and a silly one to boot. As to my grey hairs, you make a mistake! I am not so old as you think. Emile sends kind regards. You say that you are heartbroken and in tears; so am I. In conclusion I wish you health and happiness and, as for me, if they are granted to you, I too shall enjoy them! Your friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN

THIRTY-EIGHTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA*August 21*

DEAREST OF FRIENDS, VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA!—I know I have been guilty, guilty towards you, but I feel I am not one whit the better for knowing it. For I fell with my eyes open, as it were, knowing quite well what I was doing. Believe me, my darling, I am no inhuman monster, and, in order voluntarily to rend your heart, I should have had to change my naturally gentle disposition for that of a fierce wild beast; it follows therefore that, since neither my heart nor my feelings consented, I am not altogether guilty and indeed I cannot tell how I came to fall. I cannot understand it, my darling. You sent me thirty kopecks in silver and then twenty; my heart bleeds at the sight of your poor little money. You have burned your dear hand, you are on the verge of starvation and yet you bid me buy myself some tobacco. How could I go and sin against you after this? How could my conscience allow me to rob you like this? But I lost heart, dearest, from feeling that I was of no service to any one and scarcely worth more than my own boot-soles. I thought it useless to occupy myself with anything useful and sat down to read a low book, parts of which were actually indecent. So I lost all respect for myself and set to work deliberately to root out all that was good in me,

and all but brought irretrievable ruin on myself! It was not my fault, it was my hard fate. Presently I went out for a little fresh air. Everything seemed to tend towards evil even out of doors: the weather was rainy, the wind cold, and I fell in with Emile. He had already pawned all he had, he had nothing left and, when I met him, he had had nothing to eat or drink for two whole days. He was trying to pawn something which no broker would accept as a pledge. I yielded, Varinka, more out of pity for him than for my own pleasure. So that is how I fell into sin. We both wept over it together as we remembered you. He is a kindly man of much feeling. And it is because I too feel so deeply that this thing befell me. I know how much I owe to you, my darling. I have come to know myself better through knowing you; were it not for you, I should be alone and not really live at all. My persecutors used to say I was ugly, and their contempt made me despise myself; they said I was dull and stupid and I thought myself so too, but, when you came into my dreary life, my heart warmed, as it were, and I tasted happiness and discovered that I was no worse than other people, though of course I was not brilliant, that, although uncouth and awkward, I was a man still, a man in heart and mind. But, lately, feeling myself the victim of ill fortune, I came so low as to devote myself to my own destruction, and, oppressed by the weight of my own misfortunes, I fell. And now that you know all, my darling, I implore

you not to inquire further into this matter ; it makes my heart ache and is both painful and wearisome.—Your sincere friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

THIRTY-NINTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

September 3

I DID not finish my last letter to you, Mákar Alexeievitch, for it made me too sad. Sometimes I am glad to be alone, I enjoy brooding and thinking over things and giving way to my grief undisturbed ; these times recur more and more often. There is a mysterious irresistible attraction for me in my recollections, so that, for hours together, they can make me insensible to my surroundings and forgetful of the present. There is no sensation which I meet with in the course of my life now, be it pleasant or unpleasant, which does not remind me of a similar one, which I experienced in the past, oftenest of all in my childhood, my precious childhood. But such moments as these only leave me the sadder. I am so weak and my day-dreams seem to wear me out so that my health grows worse and worse.

Still this clear sunshiny morning, such as we have but few of in autumn, has brightened me up and I welcome it joyfully. And so it is autumn ! How I used to love this season

in the country! I was a very impressionable child. I loved the autumn evenings even better than the mornings. I remember that there was a lake under the mountain at a few steps from our house. The lake (I can see it now) was wide, smooth, and shone as clear as crystal! When there was no breeze, how calm it lay! Not so much as a rustle of leaves from the trees on the banks, not a ripple on the water. Gradually the air would grow fresh and almost cold, the grass would be wet with dew, fires would be kindled in the cottages, the cattle driven home—then I would slip quietly out of the house to have a look at my lake. Fishermen would often light little fires of brushwood on the shore and the water would reflect the light ever so far. The sky, cold and grey, would be streaked at the edge with pink strips of cloud, which would gradually grow paler and paler; then the moon would rise; the air would be so still that the slightest sound was audible: the flutter of a startled bird, the slightest breath of wind that stirred the rushes, the jumping of a fish. A white transparent mist would rise from the water. The distance would grow dim, everything would seem absorbed into the mist, but all that was close at hand would be quite distinct as though carved in relief: the boat; the bank; the island; a broken cask that had been forgotten on the bank rocking gently on the water; a broken bough covered with dead leaves entangled among the rushes; a belated water-bird fluttering ere it took a plunge

into the cold water, then fluttering again and soon lost to sight in the mist. I was all eyes, all ears. It is curious how I enjoyed all this though I was but a little child.

I loved the late autumn, too, when the corn is already carried and the work over, when people begin to meet in the cottages in the evenings, and await the winter. Then the days grow more and more gloomy, the sky is overcast with clouds, yellow leaves block up the pathways of the naked woods and the forest looks blue first and then black, especially in the evening when the purple mist rises and the trees are like great giants, like fearful phantoms. If I stayed out late, got separated from the rest or was alone, I would hurry my pace—it was so uncanny. I would shake like a leaf with fear, it seemed to me as though, whichever way I looked, something terrible looked at me out of the oak-tree; then the wind would go through the forest, now humming, now roaring, now moaning as though in pain, snatching clouds of leaves from the withered boughs, whirling them in the air, and after them a long, noisy flight of birds, with sharp, piercing cries, would darken the face of the sky as they flew past. I would be very much afraid and fancy that I heard a voice in my ear saying: ‘Run, child, run, do not linger; there will be terrible doings here directly!’ And fear in my heart would make me run and run till I was out of breath, to arrive home panting and find the house full of noise and bustle. We children would

all be given something to do : peas or poppy-heads to shell. The dry logs would crackle in the stove ; my mother would watch over our work, while my old nurse Uliana told stories about old times, of witchcraft and ghosts. We little ones would sit together, friend with friend, with eager faces. Suddenly we would all hush for a moment . . . 'What is that noise ? is it some one knocking ?' It was nothing but the rumble of old Frolovna's spinning wheel and how we would laugh over the mistake. But, sometimes at night, fear would keep me awake and dreadful dreams too disturb me when I did sleep. I would wake and not dare to stir, and lie trembling under the blankets until morning. Still in the morning I would get up as fresh as a daisy. I would look out of the window and see all the fields white with hoar-frost ; thin autumn snow on the naked boughs ; ice no thicker than a leaf spreading over the lake ; a white water bird would get up : birds chirped merrily. The sun would shed its bright rays upon everything and the thin ice reflect them like a looking-glass. How fresh and clear the air ! Once more the fire crackled in the stove ; we would sit round the *samovar* and our black dog Polkan, numb with the cold of the night, would look in at the window and wag his tail. A peasant would go by on a good horse to fetch firewood from the forest. How cheerful and contented we all were ! Masses of corn were laid up in the barns ; the straw roofs, the huge ricks shone

like gold in the sun! And all was peace and happiness. We all thanked God for the harvest; there was plenty of corn for the winter, so the peasant knew his wife and children would have enough to eat; and, in the evenings, the girls would sing and dance merrily, and on Sunday, they would shed tears of gratitude as they prayed in God's house. Oh how happy my childhood was!

I have been crying like a child myself over these recollections. I remember it all so vividly and the past shines out so brightly in contrast to the present sadness. How will it all end? Do you know that I am almost certain that I shall not live to see another winter. I am really very ill. I often think about death and I cannot bear the thought of never seeing the country again. Perhaps I shall soon have to take to my bed as I did in the spring, but this time I shall not get up any more. The thought is a bitter one to me. Fédora has gone out for the day and I am sitting up all alone. And of late I have been afraid of being left. I constantly fancy that there is some one else in the room who is speaking to me: particularly when I am thinking over something and rouse myself suddenly, then I feel nervous. That is how I have come to write you such a long letter; when I write, this feeling of nervousness passes off. Good-bye, I cannot write more, for I have exhausted my slender stock of time and note paper. I have only one silver rouble left out of the money I got for my gown and bonnet.

It was quite right of you to give the landlady two silver roubles ; it will keep her quiet for a time.

Try to put your clothes in order. Good-bye ! I am so tired ; I cannot understand how it is that the least thing I do makes me weary. I ought to work, but how can I ? That is my chief worry.

V. D.

FORTIETH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 5

MY DARLING VARINKA,—I have gone through a great deal to-day. In the first place I have had a headache ; so, in order to get a little fresh air, I set out to walk along the Fontanka.¹ The evening was mild and dull. At six o'clock it began to get dark. There was no rain but it was foggy, which is just as bad. Long, wide wreaths of fog passed over the sky. Crowds of people hurried along the quays, they had terrible drunken faces, for the most part expressive of despair and misery : there were tipsy peasants, snub-nosed Finnish women with their heads bare, working men, cabmen, in fact our fellow creatures of all sorts ; a locksmith's apprentice with a stripped calatch and a worn haggard face, covered with oil and smoke, and carrying a lock in his hand ; a discharged

¹ A canal in Petersburg.

soldier haggling with a hawker for a pen-knife or a bronze ring; the crowd was composed of persons like these.

Of course at such an hour there would be no others about the streets. The Fontanka is a navigable canal, and so thickly strewn with boats and barges that I always wonder how they find room to pass one another. On the bridges sat women selling limp gingerbread and cheap fruit. Poor things! they were bespattered with mud and seemed wet through. It was really no pleasure to walk along the Fontanka! Wet granite underfoot, tall, squalid, smoky houses on either side, fog below and fog overhead! It was a miserable gloomy evening.

By the time I had reached the Gorochovaia and turned down it, it had grown quite dark, and they were lighting the gas lamps. I happen not to have been down that noisy street for some time. How grand the shops are! I was quite dazzled by the display of materials, flowers and bonnets. They seem as though they were put out only for show, whereas there are actually men who can afford to buy them, and give them to their wives. The Gorochovaia is indeed a wealthy street. Many German bakers live there, and they are a well-to-do class of people. How many carriages go by! One would expect the pavement to wear out! Magnificent chariots, with windows polished like mirrors, pass by, and one catches a glimpse of velvet and silk inside, of noble-

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men's footmen with epaulettes and short swords. I watched the carriages and admired the ladies who sat within dressed like countesses and princesses. Of course it was just the time when they would be starting for balls and assemblies. It would be interesting to see a princess or some other great lady close by; it must be a beautiful sight; I never did; I have never seen them except as just now in their carriages. Presently my thoughts returned to you. O my darling! when I think of you, how my heart aches! How is it you have always been so unfortunate, my dearest? In what way are you worse than they all? My pretty, clever little cousin, why has such a cruel lot been yours? How comes it that many a good man wanders vainly about in the desert as it were all his life, while to another prosperity comes unsought? I know it is wrong to brood over such questions, I know it is free-thinking, but I really wonder, why it is that Fate's raven seems to promise all manner of good things at the very birth of one man, while another enters God's world in the wards of a foundling hospital. Fate seems as it were to make a fool of one. It is as though it said to one, 'You are a born blockhead, drink, eat, be merry, and keep yourself clean, for that is all you are good for.' It is sinful to think such things, my darling, but sometimes one falls into it almost unawares. How I wish you had a carriage to drive about in, cousin mine! If you wore silk and gold in place of your old stuff

dress, general-officers would seek for a gracious glance from you in a very different way to what they do now. Instead of being thin and delicate, you would have a dear plump little figure and fresh pink cheeks. I should be quite satisfied, if, through the brightly lit windows, I might look in at you from outside in the street, for the bare thought that you were happy and enjoying yourself would suffice to make me happy too, my darling! But now! Not only do wicked people torment you—you could afford to laugh at that—but an old libertine comes and insults you by his attentions. Though his coat may be well cut, and though it be through a gold-rimmed eye-glass that he looks at you, still he is but an unprincipled scoundrel; and yet he can have almost anything he wants, and one must give heed when his Highness speaks! And why is this so? Why, because you are an orphan, because you are defenceless, because you have no powerful friend to stand by you and give you becoming support. And what kind of persons can they be who would injure an orphan who has never offended them? They are rascals; of this I am sure and I care not what they think of themselves. So much for them! As for me I have more respect for an organ-grinder whom I met to-day in the Gorochovaia than for such people. Although the poor man drags about all day hoping some one will throw him the few paltry kopecks which form his sole means of subsistence, still he is an independent gentle-

man, for he earns his own living. He need not beg for alms ; he wears himself out as he does his instrument for the amusement of the public, and gives what pleasure he can. His is poverty indeed, but a decent poverty : tired, chilled, he must go on with his work, such as it is. And there are many honest persons, my darling, who, though they earn a little money in proportion to the usefulness of their work, need not bow down to any one or beg their bread. I, for instance, as well as the organ-grinder—that is my work is very different to his in most ways, but my work is not degrading either, and I too work with all my might. I cannot do more, it were impossible.

I mention this organ-grinder, because I happen to have felt my poverty doubly to-day. I stood watching him, for such thoughts were in my head that I stayed in the hopes of distracting them. Beside me stood some cab-drivers and a ragged little girl. The organ-grinder took up a position in front of some windows. One little boy attracted my attention more than all the rest : he seemed to be about ten years old ; he had a pretty face but looked delicate, even consumptive. His only clothing was a coarse shirt, and his feet were all but bare ; he stood and listened to the music with his lips parted ! He watched the German dolls dance, and his hands and feet grew numbed and I saw him shiver and try to pull his sleeves over his wrists. I noticed that he held a paper in his hand. A gentleman passed and threw some

money to the organ-grinder; the coin fell straight on to the box, into the garden in which a Frenchman was represented as dancing with some ladies. At the jingle of the money, the boy started, looked quickly round, and, evidently concluding that it was I who had thrown it, he rushed up to me, his hands shaking, his voice trembling, and handed me the paper saying, 'Read this, sir!' I turned over the page and of course found the usual formula: 'Kind friends, my children's mother is dying, the three children starving, come and help us and, when I die, I will not forget you in that world, who helped my children in this.' What was I to do? It was quite an every-day sort of thing and what could I give him? Nothing, of course, since my pockets were empty. But how sorry I was for him! The boy was pale, blue with the cold, perhaps hungry too, and he was telling the truth; I am sure of that. The only bad feature of the affair was that it was cruel of the parents to send the boy out half starved in such cold weather. The mother may be an ignorant woman, and perhaps she cannot work and is too ill to do more than sit with her hands before her. And to whom can she turn for assistance? Or she may be an impostor who sends out her shivering, sickly child to take people in and make his own health even worse. And what is likely to be the result on the boy's character? Beggary will harden him. No one will give him anything. (They are all stony-

hearted ; their words are cruel.) 'Go away ! Be off !' that is all he will get from any one and the boy's heart grows hard, as he shivers in the cold like an unfledged bird that has fallen, whose nest has been blown down. His hands and feet are numb, his breathing laboured. See there he is coughing already ! He will not linger long, for disease is already gnawing at his lungs and there, close by, death lies in wait for him. Death in some squalid corner ! There is no escape from him, no help—that is the boy's life ! What think you of such an one ? O Varinka ! it is dreadful to hear one beg 'for the love of Christ !' and to go by, unable to give anything. To say : 'May God help you !' and no more. There are many ways of saying 'For the love of Christ,' my darling ! One is the drawling, mechanical, practised way of the beggar : then the words do not affect one so very painfully, one says to one's-self when one hears them : 'This man has begged for years, begging is his profession and no doubt he makes a good thing of it !' But, on the other hand, sometimes they are spoken with painful effort, and so they were as they fell on my ear to-day when that boy handed me the note and, standing on the kerb-stone, besought me with his sad, hoarse voice, 'Give me something, sir, for the love of Christ.' A shudder passed through me, but I had nothing to give him. Even rich men cannot bear the poor to lament their miserable lot in their hearing ! They annoy them, forsooth, with their importunity ! And the poor

are always importunate: they even venture to disturb the rich man's slumber by their complaints.

I must admit, cousin mine, that I set about describing all this to you partly as a relief to my mind, but chiefly in order to show you what progress I have made in composition. You have yourself acknowledged that my style has improved lately. And now I am in such distress that even the innermost thoughts of my soul have an interest for me and although I know one cannot excite a like interest in others, yet, after a fashion, one enjoys justifying one's-self. And really, cousin mine, one very often misjudges one's-self and, while one saves one's waste paper, one holds one's own self of no account. Perhaps the reason I make this comparison is that I, like the boy, have been driven and hunted because I asked a favour. I will give you an allegory as an example of this. Listen to me: it happened to me, cousin mine, as I hurried to the office in the early morning, to glance at the town. I watched the people awake as it were, get up; I saw the smoke of their newly-lit fires curl up in the sky; I heard the roar of traffic,—before such a sight, such a mighty impression as this, one keeps silence; it is as though some one gave one a rap on one's inquisitive nose, and one goes one's way, silent as the flowing river, humble as the grass at one's feet. Now, my darling, think a moment of what is being done in those great houses, look into the matter and see

whether one was right in accepting so low an estimate of one's own worth. You see I speak in a figure, so you must not take my words literally. Let us peep into one of the houses. In some smoky corner, in a dark hole, which at a pinch is let as a lodging, some artisan is just waking from sleep: and he has been dreaming of boots all night long, for yesterday he cut some out badly; what a trivial subject for a man to dream about! But, after all, you see he is but an artisan, a bootmaker, and it is pardonable that his thoughts should busy themselves with his trade. He has children to feed and a starving wife, and others, besides bootmakers are sometimes in like straits, cousin mine. This is all nothing nor would it be worth while to write about it if this were all; but, in the same house, a storey higher or lower, in a gilded room, a certain very rich personage has also been dreaming of boots, of another kind of boots of course but still of boots, and indeed it strikes me that we all think a good deal about them. All this is innocent enough only there is no one by to whisper in the rich man's ear, 'Enough of such thoughts as these, which only concern yourself; you are no bootmaker, your children are well, your wife has enough to eat, look around and see if there be not other subjects more worthy your thoughts than boots!' This is what my story is intended to show you, Varinka: that after a fashion all men are equally worthy of consideration. It may be too daring a thought, cousin mine, but

it often comes up in my mind and against my will fights its way to expression. And indeed why should one be so poor-spirited as to think nothing of one's-self?

I will conclude by saying that you may perhaps think that I am inventing or that I am in a morbid frame of mind, or copied it all out of a book. No! my darling, I despise all deceit, I am not morbid, I have not copied it out of any book.

I went home feeling very sad, drew up to the table, warmed my tea-pot, and was about to pour in the water, when suddenly I looked up and saw Gorschkov, my fellow-lodger, making towards me. I had noticed that morning how he poked about among the lodgers and seemed to wish to come to me. Let me say in passing that the Gorschkov's circumstances are surely even more desperate than mine. There is a wife, there are children. I do not know what I should do if I were in his place. Well! so Gorschkov came up to me, a tear hanging on his eyelashes as usual, scraped his feet and seemed unable to utter a word. I made him sit down on a broken chair since I had no other and offered him some tea. He refused for a long time but then took a cup. He was going to drink it without sugar and, when I pressed him, refused it until I insisted upon his taking some. Then he took a tiny morsel and dropped it into his cup and protested his tea tasted very sweet. To what a depth of humility does poverty reduce one! 'And what is it you want of me?' I asked him.

‘O my kind friend, Mákar Alexeievitch, take pity on us for God’s sake!’ he cried, ‘my children, my wife are starving.’ I was about to answer him when he interrupted me. ‘I am afraid of everyone now,’ he said, ‘that is not afraid but ashamed of meeting them; people are so proud and haughty. I am indeed loth to seek help of you, my kind benefactor, I know you have troubles of your own, that perhaps you have not much to give away, but will you not lend me something? It is because I know you have a kind heart that I dare to ask of you, I know, too, that you have not enough for yourself, that you endure hardships—and so I think you will feel for us.’ And he concluded by begging my pardon for his boldness. I told him I was willing enough but had not so much as a kopeck to give him. ‘Sir,’ he cried, ‘Mákar Alexeievitch, I do not ask for much, but my wife, my little ones are starving, can you not spare me anything, however little?’

How sad it made me to refuse! but all I had left was twenty kopecks, and I had counted on them to supply my necessities on the morrow. Again I told him I could not give him anything. ‘Not ever ten kopecks, Mákar Alexeievitch?’ he pleaded. So I took the twenty kopecks out of my box and gave them to him. Oh, this poverty! I talked matters over with him and inquired how it was that he hired a room at five silver roubles if he were in such straits? He explained that he had taken it six months ago and had paid three months’ rent

in advance ; that, since then, his difficulties had so increased that he knew not where to turn. He expected that things would be settled soon but he was mixed up in a very unpleasant business. You see, Varinka, he will be called upon to give evidence in a court of law. He is prosecuting a certain merchant who has been swindling the crown by means of some contract or other ; the swindle was discovered and the merchant summoned. But Gorschkov was also in some way mixed up in the matter. He is, however, entirely innocent, not only of any roguery but also of any carelessness or culpable negligence of the interests of the crown. The affair has now extended over some years and things seem to have conspired against Gorschkov. 'I am guiltless,' he said, 'of the dishonourable action imputed to me, innocent alike of dishonesty or deceit.' But the doubt has injured his reputation and he has been dismissed from the service, for, although they could not actually convict him of guilt, still, he has been hitherto unable to clear himself of all suspicion. I believe all he says, but of course the court will not accept his word and the affair is such an entangled one that it may take a hundred years to unravel. No sooner is some of it disentangled than the merchant, by some clever manœuvre, gives the lawyers all their trouble over again. I take the deepest interest in Gorschkov, cousin mine, I am heartily sorry for him. He is a man without occupation ; his very hopelessness keeps him from doing anything ; they have spent all

the money they had put by. One must live though one be in money difficulties ; and meanwhile a child was born to them when one was least welcome and expenses ensued ; the boy fell ill,—more expenses, died,—more still ; the wife sickened ; he himself suffers from an incurable disease ; in a word, the poor man is a victim to misfortune after misfortune. He waits day after day the favourable conclusion of his lawsuit, which will, no doubt, be decided sooner or later. I am sorry, very sorry for him, my darling, and I said all I could to soothe and encourage him. Good-bye now and take every care of yourself. When I think of you it is as balm to my sore heart. It is a delight to me even to suffer, if it be for your sake.—Your sincere friend,

MAKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-FIRST LETTER. MAKAR TO VARVARA

MY DARLING VARVARA,—I am quite beside myself, so agitated am I by a very painful occurrence that my head spins. O cousin mine ! what have I got to relate to you now ? We did not expect this. At least I will not say so much for myself : I think I did expect it. My heart endured it all in anticipation, for only the other day I dreamt of something of the sort.

This is what has taken place ! I will tell it

you without an attempt at style and just as God puts it into my mind. I went to the office to-day as usual and sat down in my place to write. You must know, my darling, that I was busy yesterday over the same bit of writing when Timothy Ivanovitch came up to me and deigned himself to enjoin me to be as quick as I could over it. 'Copy it quickly, Mákar Alexeievitch,' he said, 'quickly and carefully for it goes up for signature to day.' I must tell you, cousin mine, that I was not quite myself yesterday and could not concentrate my thoughts on my writing. I was so overwhelmed with grief and anxiety! My heart felt heavy and chill, my mind, feverish and excited; I was haunted by thoughts of you, my poor darling. Well I began my copying; I copied clearly, well, but, and this I know not how to explain, either the devil led me astray or it was decreed by Fate, or was a mere matter of chance, I omitted a whole line. I suppose I was not thinking of what I was doing. For some reason or other, they kept the paper back and it was presented for his Excellency's signature this morning. I, not knowing anything of my error, presented myself to-day at the usual hour and sat down next to Emilian Ivanovitch. I must tell you that lately I have become twice as shy as before and never look any of my fellows in the face. If any one's chair so much as creaks, I am ready to die of fright. So to-day I had no sooner sat myself shyly, gingerly down, when Ephim Ackimovitch (such a tease

as never was in the world before) said, so that all might hear, 'What! Mákar Alexeievitch you here?' and here he made such a grimace that all around me shook with laughter of which apparently I was the cause. How they chuckled! And I tried not to hear, or see and sat quite still. I find that is always the best plan, it makes them give over sooner. Suddenly I hear a noise of running to and fro, of bustle, I hear, or do my ears deceive me? that they are calling for me, Mákar Djevuschkin. My heart beats, and I am hardly collected enough to know why I am so frightened; still I know this, that frightened I am, more so than ever before in my life. I feel nailed to my seat but still I hear the voices, they come nearer and nearer. Now they are close to me. 'Djevuschkin,' they cry, 'Djevuschkin! where is Djevuschkin?' I look up. Before me stands Eustace Ivanovitch and says, 'His Excellency desires you, Mákar Alexeievitch, to go to him at once, you will catch it about that paper!' That was all he said, but it was enough, was it not, cousin mine? I grow pale as death, and icy cold, I seem to have lost all feeling and stagger off more dead than alive. They lead me through one room, through another, through a third, into the private room. What my thoughts are meanwhile, I cannot tell you. I see his Excellency surrounded by a crowd of clerks and others. (They tell me that I forgot to bow to him.) I am so panic-stricken that I tremble from head to foot and

not without reason, my darling. In the first place, I am ashamed of myself and I look from side to side as though I were going mad with terror at what I see around me. In the second place, I have always behaved as though I had no right to a place in the world at all so that I doubt whether his Excellency has ever become aware of my existence. He may have heard that there is a Djevuschkin in our department but he has never had any closer acquaintance with me than that.

He begins angrily: 'What is this sir? What are you thinking of? You spoil an important paper for which there was urgent need. Have you any excuse to offer?' Then his Excellency addresses himself to Eustace Ivanovitch. All I hear of what he says are the words, 'Neglect! carelessness! it will get us into trouble.' I try to speak, to ask for pardon, and cannot, I cannot escape, I dare not so much as attempt it and then then, my darling, something happens which shames me so that I can scarcely hold my pen while I relate it. One of my buttons—deuce take it!—my button which has been hanging by a thread, suddenly snaps off, bounds (no doubt I have been twisting it without thinking), rolls along the floor straight to his Excellency's feet and all this during a general silence. That is all the excuse, all the apology, all the answer I ever make to his Excellency! The result is appalling. His Excellency's attention is at once attracted to my appearance and dress. I catch

sight of myself in a glass as I throw myself down to regain the button. I stoop, I try to catch it, it rolls along, it turns round, I cannot reach it, in a word, I make myself more remarkable than ever by my awkwardness. Then I feel my last remaining strength forsake me and that all is lost, my self-respect, my good name. And without why or wherefore, the names of Theresa and Faldony ring in my ears. At last I regain possession of the button, get up from the ground, and stand upright, and now surely, fool though I be, I shall keep quiet with my hands to my sides! But, on the contrary, I begin to tie the button on to the thread from which it has just fallen away, smiling idiotically the while. At first his Excellency turns away, then he looks at me once more and I hear him ask Eustace Ivanovitch, 'What is the matter with him? Why is he such a figure? What is he? What sort of man?' Then, my darling, he inquires whether I have distinguished myself in the service in any way? And I hear Eustace Ivanovitch answer, 'He is not remarkable, not at all remarkable, but his conduct is exemplary and he is worth his salary. Judging by his appearance now . . .' 'Well!' says his Excellency, 'let us help him a little and give him some of his salary in advance.' 'But your Excellency,' I hear them say, 'he has already drawn in advance for some time past. He is really in very poor circumstances and his good conduct has never been rewarded in any way.' I am

covered with confusion, my darling, at these words; my face feels as though on fire! 'Well!' says his Excellency sternly, 'it must all be written out again; Djevuschkin, come here and copy it all afresh and without a mistake this time.' Then, turning to the others, he gives them a few directions and they disperse. As soon as they have gone, his Excellency hurriedly draws out a pocket-book and from it a hundred rouble note which he presses into my hand, 'This is all I can give you, take it and make good use of it.' I tremble with agitation, cousin mine, so that I very nearly seize hold of his hand. But he blushes very red, I am really not departing by a hair's breadth from the truth, and takes my hand in his and presses it as warmly as if I were a general officer. 'Never mind,' he says, 'go on with your work, make no mistake and your error shall be overlooked.'

So now, my darling, I have made up my mind to beg of you and Fédora, as I would beg and even compel children of my own if I had any, to pray to God daily for his Excellency even if you forget to pray for your own father. And moreover I solemnly declare that, much as I have suffered during these last sad days from the knowledge of your misfortunes and from my own degradation and incapacity, still I do not set as high a value on the hundred roubles as on the fact that his Excellency deigned to shake hands with me, the pauper, the drunkard! By this action he restored me my lost self respect, he did me a lasting good and I am

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firmly convinced that, however sinful I may be in the sight of the Almighty, still my prayers for a blessing on his Excellency will not be offered in vain.

I am in terrible agitation of mind, my darling. My heart beats and I seem to have lost what little physical strength I had. I send you forty-five paper roubles, I shall give twenty to my landlady and keep thirty-five for myself, I shall spend twenty on my dress and the other fifteen will keep me in food for the present. I am a good deal shaken by all this morning's experiences. I am exaggerating, I am really quite calm, only my heart beats faster than usual . . . I will certainly come and see you, at present I am like one intoxicated after all I have gone through. God watches over us, my darling, my precious one!—Your sincere friend,
MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-SECOND LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

September 10

MY DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I cannot tell you how pleased I am at your good fortune and I know how to appreciate the kindness of your superior, my friend. So at last you are relieved of your burden. For God's sake do not squander any more money. Live quietly and as economically as possible and,

from this day forward, do not fail to put money by, in case misfortune should again befall you. Do not be anxious about us. I shall manage to live somehow with Fédora's help. Why have you sent us so much money, Mákar Alexeievitch? We really do not want it. We are content with what we have. True, we shall need some money soon to meet the expenses of changing our lodging, but Fédora is expecting to be paid an old debt. I keep twenty roubles for our barest necessities and return the rest to you. Please keep your money, Mákar Alexeievitch. Good-bye. Now that you are free of anxiety you will get well and cheerful. I would write more but I was in bed all yesterday and I feel very tired. Thank you for promising to call. Please come and see us, Mákar Alexeievitch. V. D.

FORTY-THIRD LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 11

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I entreat you not to leave me now that I am well and happy, cousin mine. My darling! please do not listen to Fédora and I will do anything that is for your good, if only out of regard for his Excellency I would behave well. We will write cheerful letters to one another once more, we will tell each other our thoughts,

our joys, our anxieties, if so be that we have any ; we will live near each other amicably and happily. We will busy ourselves with literature. Dear little friend ! My fortunes are quite changed and altogether for the better. The landlady is obliging, Theresa less stupid, and even Faldony seems almost brisk. I have made it up with Ratazaev. I went to him of my own accord, so happy was I. He is a kind little fellow, and all that they say against him is mere rubbish. I have discovered it to have been sheer calumny that it had ever entered his head to describe us. He told me so himself. He read his new work to me. And as to his calling me a Lovelace, that is by no means a term of derision nor of abuse. This too he explained to me. It is translated word for word from a foreign tongue, it means a 'lively fellow,' or, to express it in a more literary way, 'a boon companion.' There is nothing in that ! It was but a harmless joke after all, my darling, but, like a clown, I took offence at it. But now I have asked his pardon. What a lovely day this has been, Varinka ! Certainly there was a little fine sleet this morning ; it fell as though through a sieve, but this made the air all the fresher afterwards. I went out to buy myself some boots and bought some beautiful ones. I walked along by the Neva. I have read *The Little Bee*¹ right through. But the most important thing I have to relate I came near forgetting. This is it :

¹ The name of a story.

This morning I was conversing with Emilian Ivanovitch and Accentius Michaelovitch about his Excellency. It seems, Varinka, that his kindness is not confined to me. He is the benefactor of others also, and his kindness of heart is known to all the world. Men unite in singing his praises and in shedding tears of gratitude to him. He undertook the education of an orphan girl, and then settled so much on her as to allow of her marrying a man in a good position, an official on his Excellency's own staff. He put a widow's son into an office, and has done many other kindnesses. So, my darling, I thought it only right to contribute my mite, and relate his Excellency's kind action to me in the hearing of them all. I put my pride in my pocket. I spoke well and with fervour, and never changed colour, for I was proud of being able to tell them all. I related everything (of course I made no mention of you, my darling!) about my landlady, about Faldony, about Ratazaev, about my boots, about Markov. One of them laughed; in fact, now I come to think of it, they all laughed. Perhaps my appearance tickled their fancy, or the story of my boots—yes! it must have been the boots that amused them, for they could not have wished to be unkind. It is only that they are young, and come of wealthy parents, but they would not have laughed unkindly at me. The thought of his Excellency would have prevented their doing that, would it not, Varinka?

I still find it hard to collect my thoughts, my darling. All this has so upset me! Have you plenty of firewood? Do not go and catch cold, Varinka: colds linger so long with you. O, my darling! you quite distress me with your sad forebodings. I pray to God for you, oh! how earnestly! Have you woollen stockings or other warm clothing? Look and see. If there is anything you want, do not wound me by keeping it from me! Come to me at once. Our evil days are past. Do not be anxious about me. I look forward to the future with so much hope.

Ah! Varinka, have we not had a sad time of late? But it does not matter now it is over. Years will pass by and we shall have time to breathe. I remember when I was young, I was sometimes without a kopeck, I was cold and hungry, but nevertheless lighthearted. I would walk along by the Neva and catch sight of a pretty face, and it would make me happy for a whole day. Youth is a charming time, my darling. One feels so glad to be alive, particularly in gay Petersburg. With tears in my eyes I have besought God to forgive me all the sins into which I fell during that sad time of ours: discontent, free thought, excess, irritability. I remembered you most affectionately in my prayers. You alone, little friend, stood by me and gave me strength, you alone soothed me, you alone helped me along the way with advice and sympathy. I shall never forget it, dearest. I kissed all your little notes as I read them

over to-day. They tell me there are some clothes for sale close by here. I am going to inquire about them. Good-bye! Good-bye!—
Your devoted, MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-FOURTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

September

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—I am much agitated. Listen while I tell you what has occurred. What do you think, dear friend, of Mr. Bikov's being in Petersburg? Féдора met him. He was driving, and told the cabman to draw up, then crossed over to Féдора, and inquired where she was living. At first she did not answer. Then he laughed and said he knew who lived in the same house with her (evidently Anna Fédorovna had told him!). Then Féдора could stand it no longer, and, although she was in the open street, she began to reproach him, telling him he was an unprincipled man, and the cause of all our unhappiness. He answered that of course one was unhappy if one had not a kopeck to one's name. Féдора told him that I could have supported myself by needlework, or have married, or taken some situation, but that at present things were not going well with me, that I was ill, and unlikely to live long. He said that I was too young, too frivolous, and

that our *good name was sullied* (his very words). I thought with Fédora that he did not know our lodging, when, suddenly, yesterday I was just going to execute some commissions in the market, when he entered our room, saying he would not detain me long. He made many inquiries of Fédora about our way of living, examined everything in the room, looked at my work, and then asked, 'Who is that clerk whom you know so well?' At that time you happened to be passing through the court, and Fédora pointed you out; he smiled to himself as he looked at you. Fédora asked him to go away; told him that I was already ill with worry, and it was very unpleasant for me to see him in the house. He was silent for a moment, and then said he had not come for any special reason, and attempted to force Fédora to accept twenty-five roubles, which, of course, she refused to do. What does all this mean? What made him come? I cannot understand from whom he got so much information about us. I cannot so much as conjecture. Fédora tells me that her sister-in-law, Accinia, who sometimes comes to us, is acquainted with Anastasia, the laundress, and her cousin is watchman in a department in which there is a certain nephew of Anna Fédorovna's. Do you think the news can have got round in that way? Of course Fédora may be mistaken; we do not know what to think. I wonder whether he will come again, and am terribly afraid that he will. When Fédora told me all about it last

night, I nearly fainted. What is it they want with us? I do not wish so much as to know them. What business can they have with poor me? I am so alarmed at the thought that Bikov may come at any moment. What will become of me? What has fate still in store? For God's sake come and see me at once, Mákar Alexeievitch. Come now.

FORTY-FIFTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 18

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA.—An excessively painful event has occurred in our house, and one which is as inexplicable as it was unexpected. First I must tell you that our poor Gorschkov has been acquitted. The decision of the court has long been indubitable, but he went to hear it finally declared to-day. His affairs have come to a most satisfactory conclusion. So far as he may have been to blame for negligence, he has been freely forgiven. The court decreed that the payment of the sum due to him from the merchant should be made without delay, and so he is no longer destitute, and his name has been cleared of reproach, in fact every wish of his heart is granted. He looked quite scared and as white as a sheet, his lips trembled as he smiled and embraced his wife and children. We all went

in a body to congratulate him, and he was much moved by this, bowed right and left, and shook hands several times with each of us. It seemed to me that he had grown taller, more upright, and there were actually no tears in his eyes. How agitated he was, poor fellow! He could not keep still for two minutes together. He laid hold of everything he could put his hands on, and then laid them down again, and kept on smiling and bowing; he sat down one moment only to get up the next and again sit down; he spoke indistinctly of God knows what. I heard the words 'my honour, friends, my honour and my good name,' then he burst into tears, and most of us wept with him. Ratazaev evidently wished to encourage him and said, 'What is honour, my good friend, when one has nothing to eat? It is chiefly for the money that you should return thanks to God,' and he patted him on the shoulder. It struck me that his words had offended Gorschkov, for he cast a strange glance at Ratazaev and shook his hand off. He had not been so touchy before, my darling, but men have such different characters. I, for instance, should never exhibit any pride amid such rejoicings; for why does one sometimes show extra courtesy and condescension unless when impelled by goodwill and kindness of heart? But, of course, it is not for me to find fault. And Gorschkov himself exclaimed, 'Yes, the money is indeed welcome, thanks be to God!' and so long as we stayed with him he kept on repeating,

‘Thank God! thank God!’ His wife had ordered him a very good and tempting dinner, which the landlady had cooked herself, but Gorschkov would not sit still in his place at table. He came to all of us in our rooms and anxiously inquired, ‘Had we called him; surely we had called him?’ Then he returned to his own room, and sat down to the table, muttered to himself, was silent for a moment, and again left the room. He snatched some cards out of the mate’s hand and so they invited him to play a game of four. He played, made several mistakes in the game and left off after three or four deals. ‘No!’ he exclaimed, ‘I cannot play to-day,’ and left them hurriedly. He met me in the passage, laid hold of both my hands and looked me straight in the eyes in a very strange way, pressing my hand tight, and then went his way with a curious melancholy smile, such as one sees sometimes on the face of the dead. His wife was weeping for joy, and they kept quite a family festival. They had soon done their dinner, and, directly it was over, he said to his wife, ‘Listen, dearest, I think I shall lie down for a little while,’ and, so saying, went towards the bed. He called his little girl to him, laid his hand on her head and looked long and lingeringly at her. Then he turned to his wife again and said, ‘Where is Petinka? our Petinka?’ The wife crossed herself as she reminded him that he was dead. ‘Yes, yes,’ he said, ‘I know, Petinka is in the kingdom of Heaven.’ The wife, seeing he was not quite

himself, and overwrought by the events of the day, said, 'Lie down and rest, my dear.'

'Yes! I will directly . . . I am a little . . . then he turned away, laid himself down and again turning round, seemed trying to speak. His wife could not make out what he said, and asked, 'What is it, dearest?' But he gave no answer. Thinking he had fallen asleep, she went out to see the landlady for a short time, and returned within an hour to find her husband still asleep, and no longer restless. So she sat down by his side with her work. She says she remained half-an-hour plunged in thought, upon what subject she cannot even recall; but, for the time being, she forgot her husband. Suddenly she started up with a shiver of fear, struck by the grave-like stillness of the room. She looked and noticed that his hand still lay in exactly the same position on the bed. She went up to him, pulled down the blanket and discovered him to be already quite cold—he was dead, my darling, Gorschkov was dead, as one suddenly struck down by lightning. God only knows what his disease was. It has shocked me so much that I can scarcely realise it. One would not believe death could come so suddenly. Poor Gorschkov! how much he had suffered! His was a cruel fate! His wife is beside herself with grief. The little girl is crouched up in a corner. There is a great bustle in their room of preparation for the inquest; I do not know, of course, what the verdict will be. I am so

sorry for them, so very sorry. It is sad to think how one dare not look forward a day or even an hour! How often one worries one's-self to no purpose!—Yours,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-SIXTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 19

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I lose no time in letting you know that Ratazaev has found me work at a certain author's. I went to him and returned with such a fat manuscript, that I have plenty of work, thank God! But it is so badly written that I hardly know how to set about deciphering it. And they are in a hurry for it. It is such writing that one can scarcely make it out. We agreed for forty kopecks a folio. I tell you all this, my darling, in order that you may see how rich I shall be. Good-bye, little friend, I must begin work at once.—Your sincere friend,

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-SEVENTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

September 23

MY DEAR FRIEND, MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,
—This is the third day since I last wrote to

you, and I have been in a state of much alarm and anxiety.

Bikov was here the day before yesterday and found me alone, for Fédora had gone out. I opened the door to him, and was so frightened at seeing who it was that I could not move from where I stood. I felt myself turn pale. He came in with his usual loud laugh, took a chair and sat down. I could not regain my composure for some time, but at last I sat down in a corner to my work. He soon left off laughing, and was evidently shocked by my appearance. I have grown so thin lately, my eyes and cheeks are hollow, and I am as white as a sheet, so, no doubt, any one who had not seen me since last year would scarcely know me again. He looked at me long and steadily, and then grew more cheerful again. He made some remark, and I do not remember how I answered him, but he laughed again. He sat with me for a whole hour, asking many questions of this, and that, and the other. At last, when he got up to say good-bye, he seized my hand, and said (I repeat his very words), 'Varvara Alexeievna, between ourselves your relative and my intimate acquaintance, Anna Fédorovna, is a bad woman' (and here he called her by a very bad name). 'She brought ruin upon your cousin, and persecuted you. I too behaved in a rascally manner towards you ; but after all there is not much harm done !' Here he laughed heartily, and then went on to say he was no master of eloquence, and that the

principal thing which he wished to express, concerning which he felt bound in honour not to keep silence, he would now explain in as few words as possible. Thereupon he said that he sought my hand in marriage, for that he thought it his duty to restore me my good name ; that he was rich ; that, the wedding over, he would take me to his country place among the steppes, where he amused himself hunting hares ; that he did not intend to return to Petersburg, for it bored him, that he had a good-for-nothing nephew (so he expressed it) here in Petersburg whom he wished to cut out of the succession, and that it was chiefly for this reason, for the sake, namely, of having legitimate heirs, that he sought my hand, that it was for this reason that he wished to marry. Then he pointed out that I was very poor, and that if I came to be ill, living in such a miserable room, my death would certainly ensue within a month ; he said lodgings in Petersburg were all bad, and, finally, he asked me whether I stood in need of anything.

I was so taken aback by his proposal that I burst out crying, I cannot tell why. He thought my tears, tears of gratitude, and told me he had always known me to be a good, feeling, well educated girl, but that he had not fully made up his mind for this step until he had made careful inquiries into my present way of life. Then he asked about you, said he had heard all, that you were a high principled man, but that still he did not wish to be indebted to you,

and would five hundred roubles be a sufficient return for all you had done for me? When I told him you had done it all for love of me, and that no money could repay you, he told me that was all nonsense; all these ideas came from the reading of novels, that I was still young and read poetry, that novels spoil young girls, books corrupt morals, and that he could not endure books himself; he advised me to wait until I was as old as he, and then I might give my opinion of people; 'then,' he said, 'you will know the world better.' Then he bid me think over his proposal carefully; that he would be very unwilling that I should take such a step without due consideration, and added that thoughtlessness and impetuosity are the bane of inexperienced youth, but that all the same he sincerely hoped I should give him a favourable answer; further, that if I did not, he would marry a merchant's widow in Moscow, since he had sworn that his good-for-nothing nephew should not succeed to his property. He forced five hundred roubles into my hand 'for sweets.' He said I should grow fat in the country, that I should live in clover, that just now he had many cares, that he was bothered with business all day long, and had come away in the middle of it to see me. Then he took his leave. I thought it all over for a long time, and, at last, my friend, I made up my mind: I shall marry him, I must agree to what he proposes. If any one can save me from disgrace, give me back my good name, protect me from poverty and

future privations and misfortunes, it is he and he alone. What can I expect in the future, what better fate can I look for? *Fédora* says that one must not throw away one's chances of happiness; and surely this would be called a chance in such a connection? At any rate, I see no other course open to me, my dearest friend. What else can I do? I have already injured my health by overwork; I cannot work uninterruptedly—seek a situation. I should fret my heart out, and be of no service to any one. I am naturally delicate, and shall always be a burden to others. Of course I shall not be rapturously happy, but what else can I do, my friend, what else can I do?

I did not ask your advice, for I wished to think it over alone. The resolve of which you have just read is immovable, and I shall let *Bikov* know of it at once, though he would patiently await my decision. He said his business would not wait, that it was urgent, and that he was not minded to neglect it for trifling reasons. God knows whether I shall be happy, my destiny is in His Almighty hand, but I have made up my mind. They say that *Bikov* is a good-natured man; he will respect me, and perhaps I shall also respect him. What more can one expect of our union?

I will let you know about everything, *Mákar Alexeievitch*. I am confident that you understand all my difficulties. Do not attempt to turn me from my resolution. You will only waste your trouble. Weigh everything which

M

has persuaded me to this step in your own mind. At first I was very much agitated, but I am calm now. I do not know what is before me. What must be, must be, as God ordains it.

Bikov has just come; I break off my letter without finishing it. I have still many things to say to you, but Bikov is here already!

FORTY-EIGHTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO
VARVARA.

September 23

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I hasten to answer your letter, I hasten to tell you that I am quite stunned, my darling. But I will not touch on this. Yesterday we buried Gorschkov. But speak I must. Bikov has certainly behaved honourably, and you have accepted him, cousin mine. If it be God's will, there is no going against it, for His will must be done and the ways of the Creator are good and inscrutable, and Fédora thinks you are acting wisely. Of course you will be happy now, my darling, and contented, but, O Varinka! have you not been very hasty? You say that Mr. Bikov has business, of course he has, for, if he had no press of business, he would not be in such a hurry I saw him hasten away from his visit to you. He is a fine looking man, a very fine looking man. But

this has nothing to do with it: whether or no he be as good looking a man as I am the reverse. But how shall we write letters to one another now? As for me, of course I shall always be alone. My darling, I have considered the matter, ever since I received your letter I have been thinking things over, and your reasons for acting as you have. I had just finished copying my twentieth page when I heard from you. My darling, if you are going away, you will have to buy many things, shoes and clothes, and I know of a capital shop for such things in the Gorochovaia; if you remember, I spoke of it before. But no! you must not go, my darling, it is quite impossible. You will have so many commissions to execute, and to drive about in carriages. And you could not do so in this bad weather, it is so cold; see, it is pouring down in buckets full and you feel the cold so terribly; your heart too will be chilled, for you are afraid of strangers, and yet you are going away with one. And I, how lonely I shall be! If Féдора says that a great piece of good fortune has befallen us, it must be that she is a heartless woman and delights in making me miserable. Are you going to attend first vespers? I would go to and see you there. As Bikov says, you are well-educated, tenderhearted, and kind, but nevertheless it would suit him much better to marry the merchant's widow. What say you, my darling? Let him marry her, then! I will come to you,

Varinka, for a few moments as soon as the day closes in. It grows dark early now. I will come to-day without fail. I suppose you will be expecting Bikov, but, as soon as ever he comes, I . . . MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FORTY-NINTH LETTER. VARVARA TO
MÁKAR

September 27

MY FRIEND, MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Mr. Bikov says I must positively have three dozen chemises of Dutch linen. So we must have material for two dozen as soon as possible, we have but so short a time for our preparations. Mr. Bikov gets cross, and says there is too much fuss about my clothes. Our wedding takes place in five days time, and we leave Petersburg immediately after. Mr. Bikov is impatient and says we must not waste time over nonsense. I am so worried that I can scarcely stand on my feet. There is so much to do.

We want two different kinds of lace which are indispensable, because he says he will not have his wife look like a servant, and that I am 'to cut out the wives of all the other land-owners.' This is what he says. So, Mákar Alexeievitch, will you go to Madame Chiffon's in the Gorochovaia and ask her to send the linen and also to come here herself without delay. I am not well to-day. It is so cold in

our new apartments, and we are in a terrible muddle. Mr. Bikov's aunt is dying of old age. I am afraid she will die before our departure, but Mr. Bikov says there is no fear of that. The house is in such a state of disorder, and, as Mr. Bikov does not live here, the servants disappear, God knows where, in all directions. It often happens that we have only Féдора to wait upon us: for Mr. Bikov's valet, who is supposed to look after everything, went away the day before yesterday. Mr. Bikov comes here as he drives past every morning in a very bad temper, and yesterday he struck his clerk so that the police interfered. I had no one I could send with this letter to you so I write in the post office. There! I very nearly forgot the most important thing I had to say. Tell Madame Chiffon to be sure and alter the lace to match the pattern I gave her yesterday and to come and show me a new selection herself. Tell her also that I have thought over the petticoat body, and it should be trimmed with crochet. Oh! and the initials to be embroidered on the handkerchiefs are to be done on a frame, do you understand? On a frame and not in plain marking. Do not forget: on a frame! Oh! and I nearly forgot this! Tell her from me that the leaves are to be sewn so as to stand in relief upon the pelerine, the tendrils and thorns to be of fine cord, and the collar trimmed either with lace or a wide flounce. Please do not forget any of these instructions, Mákar Alexeievitch.—Yours, V. D.

P.S.—I am so ashamed of troubling you with my commissions. This is the third morning you have had to run about the town for me. Everything is in disorder here, and I am myself unwell. So do not be vexed with me, Mákar Alexeievitch. How wearisome it all is! And what will come of it, my friend, my dear, kind Mákar Alexeievitch. I am afraid to look forward to the future. I am always dreading something, but I live in a kind of mist.

P.S.—For Heaven's sake, my friend, do not forget any of these things I have told you. I am so afraid there will be some mistake. Do not forget the initials are to be embroidered on a frame, not plain marked.

FIFTIETH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 27

DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I have executed all your commissions most carefully. Madame Chiffon says she herself intended that the initials should be embroidered on a frame, but whether it is more suitable I do not know, for I could not understand what she said. And she mentioned too the flounce of which you wrote to me, but, what she said about it, I have forgotten. I only remember that she talked a great deal. What a horrid old woman!

But she will tell you all about the things her-

self. I was quite exhausted, and to-day I did not go to the office. Surely, my darling, you are fretting about nothing. For your pleasure I would run in and out of shops all day long. You say you dare not look into the future when, at seven this evening, you will learn all you want so much to know from Madame Chiffon herself. So do not worry yourself; keep up heart, my darling; perhaps everything may yet turn out for the best.

I would run over to you, I would certainly run over to you, and indeed I have already been to your door twice to-day. But Mr. Bikov is always there and he is quick tempered and so. . . . But what matter?

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FIFTY-FIRST LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

September 28

DEAR MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH,—Pray go to the jeweller's at once. Tell him not to make the pearl and emerald ring. Mr. Bikov says it is too dear and he cannot afford it. He is angry and says he has spent too much already, that we are ruining him, and he said yesterday that, had he known before that there would be so many expenses, he would not have engaged himself. He says that, as soon as ever we are married, we shall go away, that we shall have no visitors, and that I am not to hope to come back to town or go to dances; and that our

house is too much isolated to allow of my taking part in any gaieties. This is what he says! But Heaven knows I need the things. Mr. Bikov himself ordered them. I do not dare answer him for he is so violent. What will become of me? V. D.

FIFTY-SECOND LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 28

MY DEAREST VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I, that is, the jeweller says, ‘Very well’; but I was going to tell you first that I am ill and confined to my bed. Just now, when it is a busy time, the colds come too, deuce take them! I must tell you that, to crown my misfortunes, his Excellency has been very severe, and scolded and stormed at Emilian Ivanovitch until he was quite exhausted. You see I tell you everything. And I have something else to tell you, only I fear to distress you. You know, my darling, I am but a simple soul, and I write as it comes into my head, so perhaps I write of what you . . .—Your

MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH.

FIFTY-THIRD LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

September 29

DEAREST COUSIN VARVARA ALEXEIEVNA,—I have seen Fédora to-day, and she tells me

that you are to be married to-morrow, and that Mr. Bikov is hiring the horses already. I have already told you about his Excellency. I have looked over the bills of the shop in the Gorochovaia, and they are quite correct, though everything seems very dear. Why is Mr. Bikov angry with you? Only be happy, my darling, and I shall be glad! Yes! glad, so long as you are happy. I would go to the church, my dearest, but I cannot; I am not well enough. Now I have told you all; how shall we be able to tell each other things in future, my darling? You have loaded Fédora with benefits, cousin mine! You were quite right. God will reward you for every kindness. Good actions are never left unrewarded, and God bestows a crown on the upright man sooner or later. My darling! I have much of which I should like to write to you; every hour, every minute there is something I want to tell you. I have but one book of yours, *Tales of Bielkin*; do not ask for it again, give it to me, my darling. This is not because I am so anxious to read it at once, but you know the winter is coming, the evenings will be long, I shall be sad and alone, and then is the time to read. I shall move from this lodging into the one you had, I shall hire it of Fédora. Nothing shall persuade me to leave that good, hardworking woman. I looked carefully round your empty room yesterday. Your embroidery frame, with work still on it, has not been touched, and stands in one corner.

I looked at the work, and found shreds still hanging from it. You had begun to wind some thread on one of my notes. On the table was a half-sheet of note paper, and on it was written, 'Dear Mákar Alexeievitch, I hasten . . .,' and that was all. You had evidently been interrupted just as you were writing something very interesting to me. Behind a screen in the corner was your bed. My darling, my darling, good-bye, good-bye. I entreat you to answer this note without delay.

MÁKAR DJEVUSCHKIN.

FIFTY-FOURTH LETTER. VARVARA TO MÁKAR

September 30th

MY DEAR FRIEND, MÁKAR ALEXEIEVITCH, —All is over! My fate is sealed. I do not know how it is, but I am calm, thank God. We go to-morrow, and I say good-bye to you for the very last time, my cousin, my benefactor, my friend. Do not worry about me, be happy, remember me, and may God's blessing rest upon you. I shall often think of you, pray for you. So this period of my life is over and done! I do not carry much to cheer me in my new life from the recollections of the past; but this only enhances the value of my memories of you, and makes my heart the fonder. You have been my only friend, you alone of all here ever loved me. Of course I saw and knew

all along of your love for me. One smile, one little note of mine, sufficed to make you happy. You will be forced to do without me now, but how lonely you will be! What have you to look forward to now, my kind, my only friend! I bequeath to you my book, my embroidery frame, my unfinished letter; when you look at those lines which were never completed, read on in fancy whatever you would most have wished me to write to you, all that I ever wrote, all that I can never write now! Think of your poor Varinka who loved you so well. All your letters to me are in the top drawer of the chest at Féдора's. You say that you are ill, but Mr. Bikov will not let me go anywhere. I promise you that I will write sometimes; but God knows what may befall me. So good-bye, good-bye for ever, my friend, my dearest cousin. Would I could clasp you in my arms to say good-bye. Good-bye, my friend, good-bye; be happy; keep well! I will always pray for you. Oh! how sad I am, how my heart sinks! Mr. Bikov calls me. —Your always loving, V.

P.S.—My heart is so full, so full of tears. My tears choke me. Good-bye, good-bye! My God, my God! the sadness of it! Remember your poor Varinka!

FIFTY-FIFTH LETTER. MÁKAR TO VARVARA

VARINKA! my darling, my treasure, they are taking you away, you are going to forsake me! It had been kinder to have torn my heart from my bosom than to rob me of you. How could you let them do such a thing? And you weep as you go, for the letter I have just received from you is all blotted with tears. So you do not wish to go; they are taking you by force; you are sorry for me, perhaps you even love me at last! And with whom are you going to pass your life? How sad and weary and chill your heart will feel! Weariness will wear it out, grief will pierce it through and through. Then you will die, and they will lay you in the ground, and there will be no one to lament you! Bikov will go and hunt his hares as usual. O my darling! my darling! why have you done this, how could you make up your mind to such a step? What were you doing, what were you thinking of to do yourself such an injury? You will die there, my darling; they will torment you to death. For no little bird is more fragile than you! And where was I? Why did I stand and merely gape like a fool? It was as though I carelessly allowed a child to act unwisely because its head ached! I am a fool of fools. I thought of nothing, I saw nothing! and perhaps I was right; it was no concern of mine, but how could I have run after flounces? . . . I shall get up,

Varinka, I may be quite well to-morrow, and I shall get up. I shall throw myself in front of the wheels; I will not let you go away. But yet, how can I prevent it? What right have I to interfere? I shall go with you, I shall run after your carriage; if you will not take me with you, I shall run as fast as I can, so long as I have breath in my body. And do you know, my darling, to what sort of place you are going? You do not know perhaps, so ask me! It is all steppe, cousin mine, all steppe, bare steppe, bare as the palm of my hand. The women there have no tenderness, the men are uneducated, and almost always drunk. The leaves are falling there now, and it rains, while the wind blows even colder than it does here! Of course Mr. Bikov will have plenty to keep him employed; he can go after the hares—but you? You want to be a country lady! You, my darling! Dearest little cousin! look and see whether you are at all like one! Oh! how can you have thought of such a thing? Who shall I have to write to, my darling? Ask yourself, ‘Whom will he have to write letters to?’ Whom shall I call ‘darling?’ Whom shall I address by a little pet name, as I have you, Varinka? How shall I ever meet you again? I shall die; Varinka, do not break my heart! I have loved you as I loved God’s light, as a dear daughter, I have loved you every way, my darling little kinswoman. I lived only for your sake! I worked, and wrote, and came and went, and my papers seemed to me as though friends, and all because

I had you near me. Perhaps you did not quite realise it, but it is all true. Listen and see for yourself how impossible it is that you can leave us. You cannot go, it is not to be thought of, my darling, it is an absolute impossibility. See! there is rain falling, and you are delicate, you will certainly catch cold. No doubt your carriage is getting damp, wet through. You will no sooner have passed the barrier than it will break down; you may be sure of this, for they build such bad carriages here in Petersburg. I know them all: these carriage-builders who construct fashionable toys that last no time at all. I shall go on my knees before Mr. Bikov and persuade him to leave you with me. And you, my darling, will tell him how matters stand. Say that you are resolved upon staying here, that you will not go away! Oh! why did he not marry the Moscow merchant's widow? Let him marry her now. She will suit him far better than you will, I am sure of that, and I shall keep you here beside me. What is he to you, Varinka, this Bikov? How did he manage to ingratiate himself with you? By buying you flounces? What are they? Can they make you happy? It is all nonsense, Varinka! Where human life is concerned, flounces count for nothing. And then, as soon as my salary is paid, I shall be able to buy you as many as you like. I know the very shop for such things; will you not wait until my salary is paid? Oh! my God, my God! so you are really going to the steppe with Mr. Bikov, you are going away for

good. Oh ! my darling, my darling ! Can you not write to me once more, just one little note, and again one when you are just starting ? That will be the last, the very last letter, for the one I have just received cannot be the last ! No, no, that would be too sudden, it cannot be the last ! No ! no ! we will both write again to one another. Has not my style improved of late . . . O cousin mine ! what a thing style is. Just now I do not know what I write, I cannot control my thoughts or read my letter over to improve the composition, my pen runs on because I cannot bear to leave off writing to you, my darling, my sweet one !

THE END

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

List of Books
in
Belles Lettres



ALL BOOKS IN THIS CATALOGUE
ARE PUBLISHED AT NET PRICES

1894

Telegraphic Address—
'BODLEIAN, LONDON'

· **A** WORD must be said for the manner in which the publishers have produced the volume (*i.e.* "The Earth Fiend"), a sumptuous folio, printed by CONSTABLE, the etchings on Japanese paper by MR. GOULDING. The volume should add not only to MR. STRANG'S fame but to that of MESSRS. ELKIN MATHEWS AND JOHN LANE, who are rapidly gaining distinction for their beautiful editions of belles-lettres.'—*Daily Chronicle*, Sept. 24, 1892.

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St. James's Gazette.

March 1894

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